

SportsNutrition

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TOP SPORTS FOODS: Some healthful choices

When you are training hard, juggling exercise with school, work and social activities, plus trying to eat healthfully, you may feel frustrated you have no time to eat the proverbial three balanced meals every day. Never-the-less, you can maintain a healthful diet. The trick is to eat a variety of wholesome foods. Choose more of the best, less of the rest.

The following list includes foods that you can easily find in a convenience store, sandwich shop or salad bar, or can keep stocked at home. These nourishing choices invest in your health within a moderate to low calorie range. Because no single food is nutritionally complete, you need to choose a *variety* of foods to get a nice balance of vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates and proteins necessary for top performance and good health.

MILK, YOGURT, lowfat or skim or soy

For calcium, protein, riboflavin, vitamin D

Plan to eat lowfat, calcium-rich dairy or soy products 3 to 4 times daily to protect bones, reduce risk of developing high blood pressure, and build muscles. Chocolate milk is excellent for recovery.

CARROTS, WINTER SQUASH

For beta carotene (the precursor to vitamin A)

Munch on baby carrots for snacks. To simplify preparation, buy frozen pre-cooked winter squash or ready-to-cook, pre-cut squash.

PEPPERS, green, red, yellow

For vitamins A, C, phytochemicals

Half a pepper provides a day's supply of vitamin C. Add to salads and pizza; snack on raw peppers.

TOMATOES, fresh, sauce, or juice

For vitamins A, C, phytochemicals

Boost intake by adding sliced tomatoes to sandwiches. Choose foods with tomatoes (pizza, pasta, soup, vegetable juice).

BROCCOLI, SPINACH, kale, collard, and other greens

For vitamins A, C, phytochemicals, fiber

One stalk (cooked) broccoli offers all the vitamin C you need for a day. Stock your freezer with broccoli and spinach—easy to prepare; nutritionally similar to fresh. Add fresh spinach to salads for more nutrients than offered by pale lettuces.

BAKED POTATO, SWEET POTATO

For vitamin C, carbohydrates, potassium; beta-carotene in sweet potato

Eat the potato skin for fiber! Top potato with a little lite sour cream, or mash with milk to add moistness with less fat than butter.

ORANGES, GRAPEFRUIT, CLEMENTINES whole, juice

For vitamin C, folate, carbohydrates, potassium

A great post-exercise recovery food. Orange and grapefruit juices are nutritionally stronger than many juices: 8 ounces (fresh or frozen) provides the daily need for vitamin C.

BANANAS

For vitamin C, carbohydrates, potassium

Prevent over-ripening by storing bananas in the refrigerator. The skin blackens but the fruit is fine. Frozen chunks taste like ice cream—a great snack or a yummy addition to a fruit smoothie!

CANTALOUPE, KIWI, BERRIES, MANGO

For vitamins A, C, phytochemicals

Enjoy these fruits as snacks or in fruit salad with lowfat cottage cheese --perfect for breakfast or lunch.

CHICKEN, TURKEY

For protein

Thigh and leg meat has more iron and zinc than does breast meat, but also a little more fat. Avoid the skin, the fattiest part!

LEAN BEEF

For protein, iron, zinc

Beef is among the best sources of iron and zinc. Avoid fatty burgers and BBQ ribs; choose a lean roast beef sandwich or a lean burger.

TUNAFISH, SALMON, canned or fresh

For protein, omega-3 fish oil

The oil in any fish is health protective. Limit your intake of fried fish. Mix tuna with lowfat mayonnaise, when possible.

NUTS, PEANUT BUTTER, and other NUT BUTTERS

For vitamin E, protein, fiber

Although peanut butter and nuts are high in fat, their fat protects against heart disease. Enjoy peanut butter in sandwiches or with fruit (apples, bananas). Snack on nuts and trail mix.

HUMMUS

For fiber, carbohydrates, B-vitamins

Hummus is a fun snack when used as a dip for baby carrots, pita, or crackers. Made from chick peas, it offers both carbs and protein.

BRAN and WHOLE GRAIN CEREALS, enriched

For fiber, carbohydrates, B-vitamins, iron

Bran is excellent for fiber (to help prevent constipation). Select "fortified" and "enriched" cereals for the most iron. Drink orange juice with fortified cereals to enhance iron absorption

BREADS, ROLLS, BAGELS, CRACKERS, whole grain

For carbohydrates, fiber, B-vitamins

Hearty, whole grain breads and bagels (rye, whole wheat, oatmeal) are preferable to those made with refined white flour. Limit butter, margarine, and mayonnaise on breads, rolls, and sandwiches.

PIZZA, thick whole-wheat crust with vegetable toppings

For calcium, protein, vitamin A, carbohydrates

Of popular fast foods, non-greasy pizza with thick crust, single cheese, and vegetable toppings (*not* pepperoni or sausage) is preferable to burgers. If the pizza is oily, blot off the grease with a napkin.

POPCORN, air popped or homemade with canola oil

For carbohydrates, fiber

A whole grain snack that is preferable to greasy chips. Be cautious of even "lite" commercial popcorn brands; they can be half fat.