

# Fueling Trojan Athletes



[casshealth.org](http://casshealth.org)

# Fueling Football Players

American football is a sport of short bursts of high-intensity exercise, coupled with a serious weight-training program to build muscle mass. Good nutrition can help build muscle mass, increase speed, and decrease body fat. Preseason football can be very intense, with two-a-day practices held in the summer in hot, humid conditions. Nutrition needs depend on the position played and body composition, but general principles of good nutrition and hydration are beneficial for all football players.

## Fueling Strategies

Football players spend several hours each day in training and conditioning (including weight training) and practice for about 2 hours a day during the preseason. The competitive season usually lasts 3 to 4 months, culminating in playoffs and championship games. Football players who are trying to gain weight should eat 5 to 6 times each day and be sure to eat after weight-training sessions and practice to aid recovery. Football players who are trying to improve body composition by losing body fat should use the off-season to reduce calories for weight loss.

The nutrients that provide energy (calories) are carbohydrate, protein, and fat. The amounts of each nutrient you need to fuel your practice and competition are given below.

## Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate should make up most of your diet. During intense training periods, eat 2.3 to 3.2 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (5 to 7 grams per kilogram). For example, a 200-pound football player would need to eat 460 to 640 grams of carbohydrate a day. On less intense training days or when sidelined by injury, you only need 1.4 to 2.3 grams of carbohydrate per pound (3 to 5 grams per kilogram).

Choose high-quality carbohydrate foods such as whole grain breads and cereals, rice, pasta, starchy vegetables, whole or dried fruit, and low-fat milk and yogurt. Eat fewer refined carbohydrate and sweets such as pastries, cookies, cakes, candy, sugar-sweetened soft drinks, fruit drinks, tea, and specialty coffee drinks.

These foods have 15 grams of carbohydrate:

- 1 slice bread
- 6-inch tortilla
- ½ cup corn
- ½ cup mashed potatoes
- ½ medium baked or sweet potato
- 1/3 cup rice
- 3 cups popcorn
- 1 small apple
- 15 grapes
- 2 tangerines
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- ½ cup orange juice
- 3 cups green beans
- 1¼ cups milk or yogurt

## Protein

Protein provides the building blocks for muscle mass and for healthy growth and development. You need 0.6 to 0.8 grams per pound (1.3 to 1.8 grams per kilogram). For example, a 200-pound football player would need 120 to 160 grams of protein a day.

Timing of protein intake is important for building muscle. Eat 20 to 25 grams of protein within the first hour after weight training to provide needed amino acids (the building blocks of protein) to your muscles for repair and growth. Eating more protein than the recommended amount will not build muscle faster or add extra muscle mass.

Choose lean protein foods such as lean beef and pork, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, low-fat dairy foods. Nuts are a good source of protein and contain healthy fats. Eat fewer high-fat protein foods such as regular burgers, brisket, ribs, sausage, and full-fat cheeses and dairy foods.

These foods have 7 grams of protein:

- 1 ounce cheese
- 1 ounce beef, pork, chicken, turkey, or fish
- ¼ cup cottage cheese
- ½ cup black beans or kidney beans
- 1 whole egg
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 cup milk or plain yogurt

## Fats

There is no specific recommendation for fat for football players, but healthy fats should be a part of every athlete's diet. Healthy fats include olives and olive oil, nuts and nut butters, avocado, and vegetable oils (such as canola oil). Fat has more calories than carbohydrate or protein so healthy fats can help add calories for football players who want to gain weight.

## What Should Football Players Eat Before and After a Workout?

When possible, eat 3 to 4 hours before a hard practice or competition. Aim for a low-fat meal with about 200 to 300 grams of carbohydrate and 30 grams of lean protein. This will ensure you have enough fuel on board but will leave time for your stomach to empty before a game or practice. A turkey sub sandwich with baked chips and a side of fruit, or a grilled chicken wrap on a flour tortilla with pretzels and fruit juice or low-fat milk are examples of meals that will meet the energy demands of a long practice or competition.

If there is not enough time to eat 3 to 4 hours before practice or competition, eat a snack 1 to 2 hours before a workout. Good choices include juice, fruit, milk, granola or cereal bars, a small bagel with peanut butter, cheese and crackers, a bowl of cereal, or yogurt. If there is less than 1 hour before exercise, liquids, such as a sports drink or a low-fat liquid meal replacement, may be the best choice. Football players should not train hungry. Always eat something before a long workout.

For practices longer than 1 hour, pack snacks. Try to eat 30 to 60 grams of carbohydrate every hour. Good choices for snacks include sports drinks, which provide carbohydrate, fluid, sodium, and potassium; peanut butter sandwiches; pretzels; string cheese; trail mix; dried fruit; orange slices; baked chips; smoothies; or 100% fruit juice.

After practice, recover with a carbohydrate- and protein-rich snack. Carbohydrate replaces muscle glycogen (carbohydrate stored in muscles) that was lost during a long practice or competition, and protein stimulates muscle protein repair and growth. Good choices include a turkey or grilled chicken sandwich, a slice of vegetable-cheese pizza, low-fat chocolate milk, cottage cheese and fruit, or cheese and crackers. If you are practicing again the same day or competing or practicing the next day, start your recovery within 30 minutes after training. If the following day will be a rest day, add recovery foods to your next meal.

## Hydration Strategies: What Should Football Players Drink?

Pads, helmet, and the uniform make a football player a human sweatbox. Sweat rates vary among players, but some athletes can lose more than a gallon of sweat on a hot, humid day. Sports performance suffers when football players lose 2% body weight or more through sweating. For a 200-pound athlete, a 4-pound weight loss is equal to 2% body weight. Weigh yourself before and after practice to determine how much fluid you lose, and drink 2 cups (16 ounces) of fluid for every pound lost.

Water is best for most athletes. Plan to drink about 2 cups of water 2 to 3 hours before a practice or game. Then drink 1 cup (8 ounces) of water 10 to 20 minutes before hitting the gym or field. Most workouts are long and strenuous, so drink about 1 cup of fluid every 10 to 20 minutes during your workout. Keep a sports bottle filled with water on the bench so it is easy to reach. Take a few sips of fluid every time the athletic trainer hands you your water bottle.

Sports drinks are a good choice when you have long, hard practices or during a game when the heat and humidity are high. Stick to the basic tried-and-true sports drinks such as Gatorade or PowerAde, because they provide a good balance of carbohydrate, sodium, and potassium to replace losses. Follow the same drinking schedule as for water, but also listen to your body. Drink when

you are thirsty and monitor how much you urinate and the color of your urine. If you are urinating frequently throughout the day and your urine is a light-straw color, you are probably drinking enough fluids.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*What should I eat at halftime?*

Halftime is a good time to refuel and rehydrate. A sports drink will provide carbohydrate and electrolytes, such as sodium and potassium. Carbohydrate snacks will provide energy for the second half, so try orange slices, bananas, trail mix with dried fruit, or a low-fat energy or granola bar.

*There are a lot of protein shakes on the market that promise to build muscle. Should I try one?*

Protein is important for building muscle, but there is nothing magic about protein shakes. Food provides all the protein needed to build muscle. Low-fat chocolate milk is a popular muscle- building and recovery drink. Milk contains 2 types of protein, whey and casein, along with carbohydrate, vitamins, and minerals, making it a good substitute for more expensive protein drinks. Some protein shakes that promise to build muscle have been contaminated with substances that are banned by both college and professional teams, including pro-hormones or amphetamines. Stick to real food to avoid the risk. Dietary supplements, including protein shakes, are taken at your own risk.

*What are some good resources for nutrition and football?*

The best resource is a registered dietitian nutritionist, especially one who specializes in sports nutrition.



# Food Basics

## **The Basics**

- Eat breakfast every day.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat five servings of fruits & veggies.
- Eat lean protein with meals and snacks.
- Choose foods that help you feel your best.
- Tune into your body's cues for when you're thirsty, hungry, and full. Respect your body by meeting its needs.
- Plan ahead for meals and snacks.

## **Parent's or Caregiver's Role**

- Choose and purchase the food.
- Provide regular meals with snacks.
- Eat together as often as possible.
- Encourage cooking and preparing food together.

## **Athlete's Role**

- Choose if they are going to eat.
- Determine how much to eat.
- Stop eating when they are full.
- Decide how fast/slow they will eat.



# Hydration

Staying hydrated is a key ingredient to keeping your body healthy and safe during intense exercise. Dehydration can increase your risk of injury or cause serious heat illnesses.

## WATER BASICS

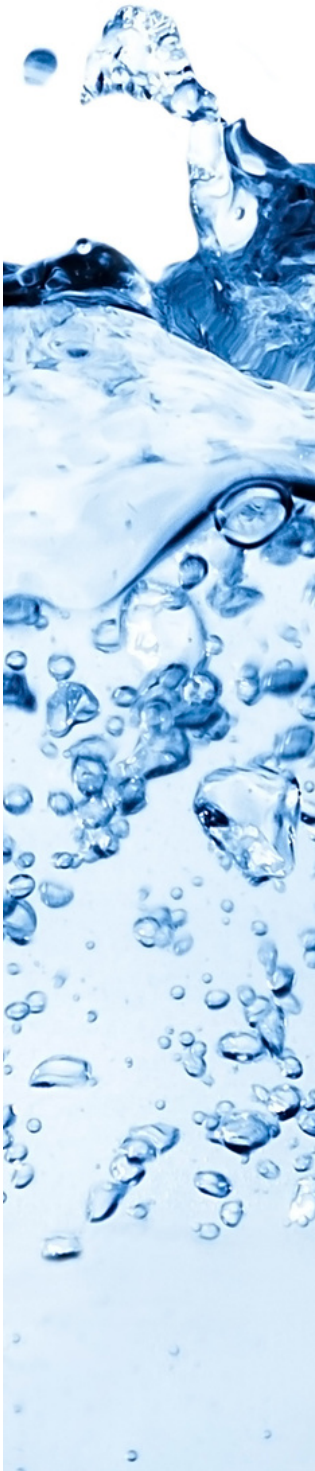
- ✓ Check your urine and aim for clear to light yellow.
- ✓ If you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated.
- ✓ Aim for 80-120 ounces of fluid each day, or 1/2 to 1 ounce per pound of body weight
- ✓ Drink 8-12 ounces of water every 20 minutes during activity
- ✓ Don't over do it.

## WHEN TO CONSIDER A SPORTS DRINK

- ✓ Exercise is longer than an hour
- ✓ Intense workouts
- ✓ Practicing or playing in high humidity & heat
- ✓ Excessive sweating

## WARNING SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

- Intense thirst
- Exhaustion
- Increased temperature
- Fast heart rate
- Fast breathing
- Confusion
- Fainting or feeling dizzy
- Cramping
- Headaches
- Dark urine



# Calories: How much should an athlete eat?

Active teenagers need lots of fuel to get them through the day. On average ...

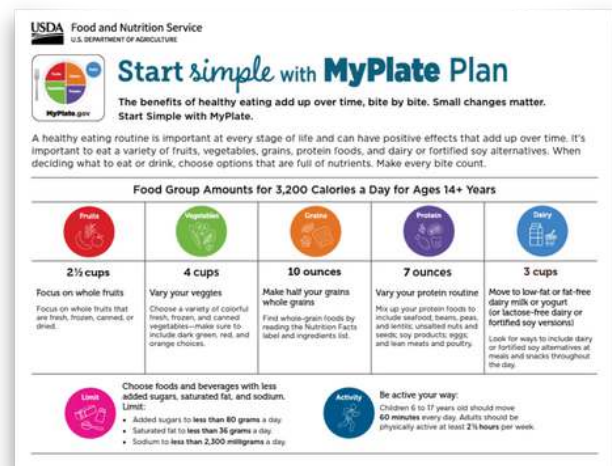
- Boys need 3,000 to 4,000 calories a day.
- Girls need 2,400 to 3,000 calories a day.

Teen athletes benefit from eating regularly (every few hours) and incorporating a mix of carbohydrates, fats, and protein every time they eat.

## MyPlate Plans

For a more personalized plan, we recommend using the tools on MyPlate.gov. With their planning tool, you'll enter your age, sex, weight, height, and level of physical activity. A food plan will then be calculated that you can view online or download and print. It's important to remember that every body is different and you may need more calories on very active days, and less on other days. The MyPlate Plan is a great starting point and should be used along with your own body's needs and hunger cues.

- Start at [myplate.gov/myplate-plan](http://myplate.gov/myplate-plan).
- Click on **Start**.
- Enter your age, sex, weight, height, and level of physical activity.
- Click **Calculate food plan**.
- Click on the calorie amount calculated to view and then download a MyPlate plan for that amount of daily calories.



# How Teen Athletes Can Build Muscles with Protein

Article from eatright.org — Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Eating protein doesn't equal big muscles. Instead, muscle growth is a complex process that relies on adequate consumption of protein and calories, hormones the body produces, including human growth hormone and testosterone, and a healthy dose of physical activity. Here are a few facts and tips to keep in mind before you amp up your protein in search of a new physique.

## Work Builds Muscle

Although eating protein doesn't build muscle on its own, the presence of protein in an athlete's eating pattern is important. Believe it or not, when you exercise, such as lifting weights or running, some of your muscle cells break down. Protein from food helps repair this damage from exercising and builds up more muscle, making them stronger.

## Strike a Balance

While protein is important for building new muscles, **eating the right amount of protein** [and at the right time] **is key**. Consuming more protein than your body needs may translate to excess calories that must be stored, usually in the form of fat. Too little protein consumption means your body has to supply it itself, which can result in muscle breakdown and loss. When you eat a balanced diet that includes enough calories and carbohydrates, your body won't use protein as a calorie source — it will spare it to build muscles and repair them when needed.

## How Much Protein Is Enough?

Young athletes need slightly more protein than their peers who aren't athletes. Protein needs are based on age, sex, body weight and stage of development, with teens needing between 10 to 30% of their daily calories from protein. Although an individual's exact needs will vary, the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) provides a good reference for how much of a certain nutrient a healthy individual needs in a day. The RDA for protein is 46 grams for teenage girls and 52 grams for teenage boys per day.

Most athletes are able to meet these protein requirements and then some. In fact, studies show that young athletes consume two to three times the RDA for protein! Although athletes may have higher protein needs than their peers, contrary to popular belief, consuming large amounts of protein does not build additional muscle.

One strategy that may provide an advantage, though, focuses on timing. Studies now show that it is not just the total protein intake for the day that counts for athletes. The body can best build and maintain muscles when protein is divided relatively evenly throughout the day. To do this, include a source of protein at each meal and snack. [Our Athletic Trainer recommends about 20g of protein within 30 minutes post-exercise.]

## The Best Protein Sources

Many foods contain protein, but high-quality protein comes from beef, poultry, fish, eggs, milk and dairy products, soy and soy products. Including a variety of plant-based sources of protein, such as beans, nuts, and seeds throughout the day can also help to meet protein requirements.

## Beware of Protein Supplements

Some athletes wonder about using a protein supplement such as protein powder or a high-protein drink. Overall, this isn't necessary and even might be dangerous. Using protein supplements may lead to excessive protein intake, taxing the kidneys and promoting dehydration. Plus, the risk for contamination with steroids, hormones or other unwanted ingredients is real, as the safety of dietary supplements is largely left to manufacturers.

The good news? You can meet your protein needs with food alone! Just be sure to eat a serving of protein, like the ones above, at each meal and snack.



# Foods that Fuel

## Lean Meats

- Boneless chicken breast\*
- Fish (cod, salmon, tuna)\*
- Lean beef (steak, burger)\*
- Turkey\*
- Pork\*
- Eggs or egg whites\*

## Dairy

- Low-fat milk\*
- Low-fat yogurt\*
- Greek yogurt\*
- Cheese\*
- Low-fat cottage cheese\*

## Grains

- Whole wheat or whole grain bread items like bagels, tortillas, pitas, English muffins
- Oatmeal\*
- Whole grain pasta
- Whole wheat crackers
- Brown rice
- Quinoa\*
- Whole wheat or whole grain cereals

## Beans, Nuts & Seeds

- Edamame\*
- Black beans\*
- Chickpeas\*
- Lentils\*
- Nuts and seeds\*
- Tofu\*
- Nut butters\*



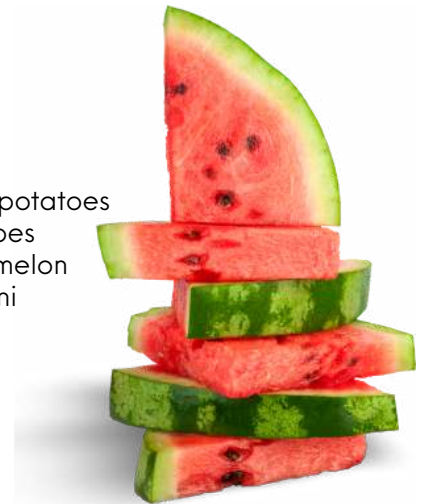
## How much protein do I need to eat?

For very active teens who are looking to build muscle mass, aim for 1/2 to 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight.

\*Foods that are good sources of protein.

## Fruits & Vegetables

- |                   |               |                          |                  |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| • Apples          | • Carrots     | • Lettuce, spinach, kale | • Sweet potatoes |
| • Apricots        | • Cauliflower | • Oranges                | • Tomatoes       |
| • Avocados        | • Celery      | • Peaches                | • Watermelon     |
| • Bananas         | • Cherries    | • Pears                  | • Zucchini       |
| • Berries         | • Corn        | • Peppers                |                  |
| • Broccoli        | • Cucumbers   | • Pineapple              |                  |
| • Brussel sprouts | • Grapes      | • Plums                  |                  |
| • Cantaloupe      | • Green beans | • Potatoes               |                  |



## Smoothies: A Great On-the-Go Option

Start with a cup of liquid like water or milk...

- Add a cup of frozen fruit you like, such as:
  - Blueberries, strawberries, or blackberries
  - Banana
  - Mango
  - Peaches
- Consider adding healthy fats like avocado, peanut butter, or almond butter.
- Consider adding in a vegetable like spinach, kale, tomato, or carrot.
- Blend together, adding ice or liquid as needed.

## Ideas for Items to Have on Hand

- Chicken salad
- Egg salad
- Pre-made sandwiches
- Beef or turkey sticks
- Tuna packets
- Premade salads
- Peanut butter

## Snack Ideas for Busy Days (Perfect for a backpack!)

- 100% juice boxes
- Trail mix
- Peanut butter crackers
- Granola bars
- Dried fruit
- Applesauce pouches
- Almonds
- Peanuts
- Cashews



# Healthy Snacks to Refuel

The best sports recovery snack choices for youth athletes are the foods that they are familiar with and that they tolerate. Serving a combination of carbohydrate-rich foods with protein will help prevent muscle soreness and prepare your child for their next practice or competition. A meal or snack will also help youth athletes to refuel and rehydrate their body after intense activity. Healthy snack combinations include the following:

¾ cup low-fat yogurt +  
½ cup granola +  
¾ cup frozen peaches

Trail mix made with:  
1 ounce beef jerky +  
1 ounce dried pineapple +  
½ cup ready-to-eat cereal

1 cup low-fat chocolate milk +  
8 graham crackers

1 apple +  
2 tablespoons of  
peanut butter

12 whole wheat tortilla chips +  
½ cup black bean and corn salsa

1 cup ready-to-eat cereal +  
1 cup low-fat milk

1 ounce pretzels +  
1 ounce raisins

6 wheat crackers +  
1 ounce summer sausage +  
1 ounce low-fat cheese

1 fruit and nut granola bar +  
3 ounce applesauce pouch

Fruit smoothie made with  
¾ cup low-fat yogurt +  
1 small banana  
½ cup low-fat milk

12 wheat crackers +  
¼ cup avocado +  
1 low-fat mozzarella string cheese

1 mini bagel +  
2 tablespoons cream cheese +  
1 cup low-fat milk

½ cup cooked oatmeal +  
1 cup blueberries +  
2 tablespoons nuts

1 whole wheat English muffin +  
2 tablespoons peanut butter +  
1 tablespoon fruit preserves

2 tablespoons hummus +  
1 cup raw veggies such as carrots,  
broccoli, cauliflower

1 medium orange +  
1 hard-boiled egg

6 wheat crackers +  
⅓ cup tuna salad

1 eight-inch tortilla +  
2 ounces sliced turkey

Information from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Nutrition Care Manual



# Building Good Habits

In addition to good nutrition habits, athletes also need to develop good habits for recovery in between practices and competition.



## **Sleep**

- Aim for 8 hours of sleep every night to help your body recover from practices and competition.
- Create a healthy routine each night to help yourself fall asleep.
  - Turn off electronics like phones, laptops, and TVs a half hour to hour before bed.
  - Use the time before bed for self-care like stretching, journaling, or reading.
  - Stick to a regular bedtime and wake-up time.
  - Avoid or cut back on caffeine.

## **Cool-Downs, Massage, & Stretching**

- Don't skip the cool down at the end of a workout.
- Use a foam roller or tennis ball to massage muscles.
- Stretching — both static and dynamic — can help you reduce soreness and may help prevent injuries.
- Keep ice packs (or bags of frozen peas) on hand. When needed, apply the ice for 20 minutes at a time.
  - You can also make an ice pack by mixing one cup of rubbing alcohol with three cups of water and freezing in a plastic freezer bag.

## MEAL PLANNING TIPS

- Start by checking the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry to see what you already have on hand.
- Look at the calendar and determine when and where you'll eat your meals, and make note of any special events or considerations that you'll need to plan around.
- Check out the weekly grocery ads to see what's on sale and in season.
- Review your meals and see if there is something from each of the food groups in most of your meals. This is the simplest way to make sure your meals are healthy.
- If you have extra room in your grocery budget, try to stock up on the pantry items you use regularly.

What do I already have at home?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Breakfast</b>					
<b>Snack</b>					
<b>Lunch</b>					
<b>Snack</b>					
<b>Dinner</b>					
<b>Did I include...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Veggies</li> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Protein</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Veggies</li> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Protein</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Veggies</li> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Protein</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Veggies</li> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Protein</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grains</li> <li>• Veggies</li> <li>• Fruits</li> <li>• Dairy</li> <li>• Protein</li> </ul>

GROCERY LIST

FRUITS & VEGETABLES


MEAT


FISH & SEAFOOD


DAIRY


BREADS


CANNED GOODS


FROZEN GOODS


RICE & PASTA


CONDIMENTS


SNACKS


BEVERAGES


OTHER
