

**BEEF.**  
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# Back to School with Sports Nutrition Toolkit

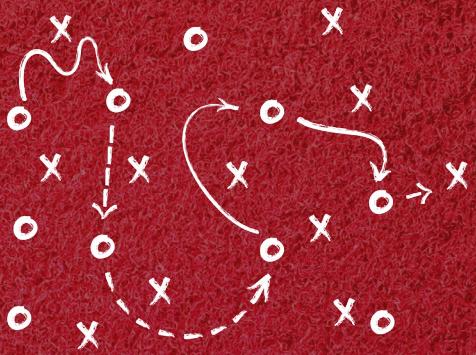
For Athletes, Coaches, and Parents



# Toolkit Contents

## Be Prepared for Back to School with these Sports Nutrition Tips to Fuel Optimal Performance

As summer comes to an end, athletes are gearing up to head back to school. In addition to classes, athletes must be prepared for morning practices, afterschool workouts, evening competitions, and weekend tournaments. Having a sports nutrition plan in place can help to ensure that athletes are setup for success in both the classroom and on the playing field all year long.



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## Fuel Your Body for Optimal Performance

If athletes want to perform at their best, it is important that they have a sports nutrition plan in place to support both their health and performance goals.

### Carbohydrates for Energy

Carbohydrates should be at the foundation of an athlete's meal plan. Similar to gas used to fuel a car, carbohydrates provide the body with the energy needed to perform at its best.

Athletes can add carbohydrates to their meal plans from a variety of food groups, including:

- **Grains:** Bread, bagels, wraps, cereal, oatmeal, pasta, rice
- **Fruit:** Fresh, frozen, dried, canned in 100% fruit juice, applesauce
- **Starchy Vegetables:** Potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, corn, beans, peas, legumes
- **Dairy:** Milk, yogurt, cottage cheese

The daily carbohydrate needs of athletes vary based upon both the amount and intensity of activity the athlete is participating in.<sup>1</sup> On days when athletes will be working out at a high-intensity or for a longer-duration, they have higher carbohydrate needs than on low-intensity or recovery days.

On recovery-days or days when athletes will be doing lower intensity or shorter duration workouts, they can reduce the amount of carbohydrates on their plates. On these days, athletes should focus on balancing out their plates with a nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables.



Fluctuating the amount of carbohydrates consumed based on activity can help athletes tailor their daily meal plan to meet their performance needs.



**Pro Tip:** Fuel up with carbohydrates to support your daily training and competition needs.



# Build and Repair with Protein



Protein has many important roles in the body, including supporting athletes with building and maintaining healthy, lean muscle mass. It also can support the health of other tissues, such as tendons and bone.

To get the most benefit from protein intake, athletes should consume adequate, high-quality protein spread throughout the day by including it with each meal and snack.<sup>1,2</sup>

Following exercise, the muscles have a heightened response to protein intake. Consuming protein with post-workout meals and snacks can help optimize the body's ability to build and repair muscle after activity.<sup>1,2</sup>

Athletes typically require higher protein intakes compared to the general population and should aim to consume ~ 1.2-2.0 grams of protein per kilogram (kg) of body weight per day.<sup>1,3</sup> Although there is limited research in youth and adolescent athletes, a goal of 1.5 g/kg/day appears sufficient to support both health and performance needs.<sup>3</sup>

It is important for athletes to remember that eating protein alone will not result in muscle gain. To build muscle, athletes must combine their sports nutrition meal plan with a well-planned strength and conditioning program.

**Pro Tip:** Protein quality is a term used to describe a protein that has sufficient amounts of all nine essential amino acids. Generally speaking, proteins that come from animal sources such as beef, poultry, fish, eggs or dairy are complete, or high-quality, proteins, whereas most plant sources of protein tend to lack one or more essential amino acids and are thus considered “incomplete” proteins.

[VIEW SOURCE](#)



## Calculate Your Daily Protein Needs:

Body Weight in Pounds \_\_\_\_\_  $\div 2.2 =$  \_\_\_\_\_  
Body Weight in kg \_\_\_\_\_

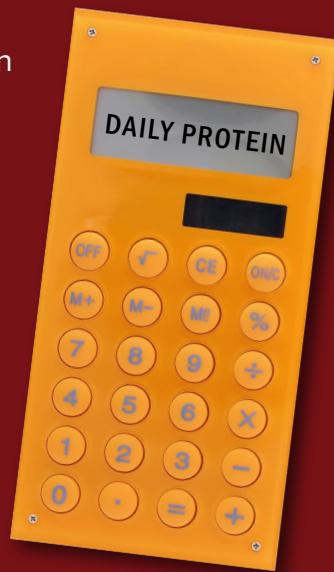
Body Weight in kg \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 1.5 =$  \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein per day

In addition to total daily protein intake, athletes should aim to include an adequate amount of protein with meals and snacks throughout the day, as well as following exercise. It is recommended that athletes aim to consume 0.3 g/kg of protein at each eating occasion.<sup>1,3</sup>

For teen athletes, this generally calculates to be in the range of ~15-25 grams of protein at each meal or snack depending on the weight and activity level of the athlete.

## Calculate Your Meal/ Snack Protein Needs:

Body Weight in kg \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 0.3 =$  \_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein per meal/snack



# Types of Protein



Proteins are composed of individual building blocks called amino acids. There are 20 amino acids used by the body to build and maintain muscle, repair body cells and tissues, and in the development of hormones and enzymes. Of the 20 amino acids, nine are considered to be essential amino acids because the body cannot make them. Therefore, the nine essential amino acids must be consumed in the diet.<sup>2</sup>

High-quality, complete proteins are dietary sources of protein that contain sufficient quantities of all nine essential amino acids, which the body can use to efficiently build muscle. Animal-source foods, such as meat, eggs and dairy are complete proteins, while plant-source foods are typically limiting in one or more essential amino acids.<sup>2</sup>

*Examples of high-quality, complete proteins:*

- Beef
- Poultry
- Pork
- Seafood

## Adding Protein to Meals and Snacks

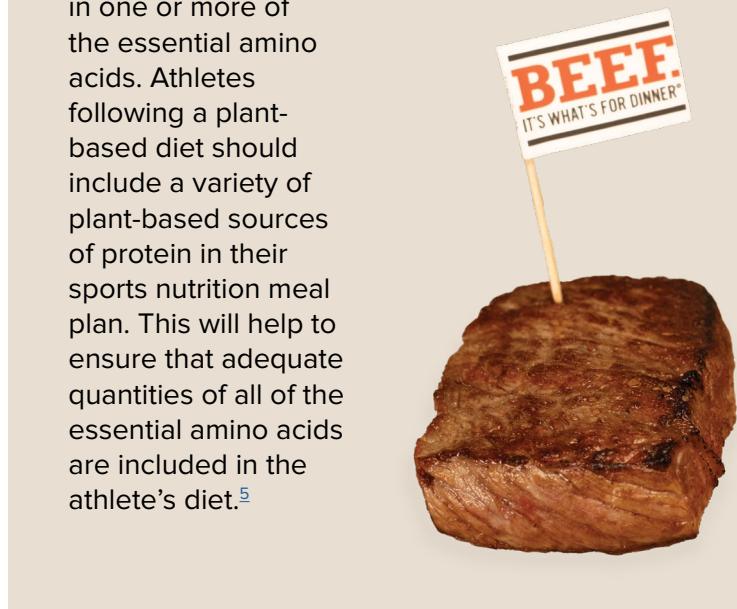
Sources of lean protein athletes can include in their meals and snacks include:

- Lean cuts of beef
- Chicken, turkey
- Seafood, fish
- Pork
- Eggs
- Low-fat milk, high-protein milk
- Greek yogurt
- Cheese, string cheese, cottage cheese
- Beans, legumes
- Nuts, nut butter
- Seeds, seed butter
- Soy, tofu

### Did You Know?

Beef is a high-quality, complete protein that contains all **nine of the essential amino acids**, plus numerous other non-essential amino acids in a balanced amount. A 3-oz serving of beef provides about 25 grams of protein,<sup>4</sup> which can help support athletes with meeting their daily protein needs.

Many plant-based sources of protein are deficient in one or more of the essential amino acids. Athletes following a plant-based diet should include a variety of plant-based sources of protein in their sports nutrition meal plan. This will help to ensure that adequate quantities of all of the essential amino acids are included in the athlete's diet.<sup>5</sup>



**Pro Tip:** Many are surprised to learn many of their favorite beef cuts are lean including beef tenderloin, flank steak and strip steak. As another guide in selecting, look for "round" or "loin" in the name.



# Optimizing Nutrition for Athletic Performance



Including a variety of colorful, nutrient-dense foods is an important principle for any athlete. Two key components of a performance-focused diet include consuming adequate protein and incorporating anti-inflammatory foods. Below are guidelines to help athletes make informed choices.

## Protein Serving Sizes

Understanding how much food is needed to meet protein goals can help athletes plan meals effectively. Here are examples of foods that provide approximately 25 grams of protein:

- **3-oz cooked lean beef:** 173 calories, 25g protein<sup>4</sup>
- **4 large eggs:** 288 calories, 24g protein<sup>6</sup>
- **3 cups low-fat milk:** 318 calories, 24g protein<sup>7</sup>
- **1 cup low-fat cottage cheese:** 163 calories, 28g protein<sup>8</sup>
- **8 Tbsp peanut butter:** 752 calories, 28g protein<sup>9</sup>
- **1.66 cups cooked black beans:** 378 calories, 25g protein<sup>10</sup>

## Balance Your Plate with Anti-Inflammatory Foods

A well-rounded sports nutrition plan should also include foods that help reduce inflammation and support recovery. Anti-inflammatory compounds like antioxidants, phytochemicals, and omega-3 fatty acids can help mitigate the effects of intense training.<sup>11</sup>

Top anti-inflammatory food choices include:<sup>12,13,14</sup>

- **Fruits:** Berries, cherries
- **Vegetables:** Dark leafy greens, tomatoes, broccoli, bell peppers, mushrooms, avocados
- **Nuts & Seeds:** Walnuts, almonds, pistachios, chia seeds, flaxseeds
- **Fatty Fish:** Salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring, sardines
- **Herbs & Spices:** Turmeric, ginger, garlic, cinnamon, rosemary



# Key Vitamins and Minerals for Athletes

There are numerous vitamins and minerals that are important for an athlete's health as well as sports performance. Let's take a look at several key nutrients that are especially important for growing athletes to include in their sports nutrition meal plans.

## Iron

Iron is a mineral with many important roles in the body. It is necessary for growth, the formation of connective tissue, for cognitive function, and to maintain a healthy immune system.<sup>15</sup>

Iron is needed for the formation of hemoglobin, which is a component of red blood cells. Hemoglobin helps transport oxygen throughout the body and to working muscles during exercise.<sup>15</sup>

When an athlete's iron stores become low, iron-deficiency anemia can result. Iron-deficiency can have a negative impact on an athlete's health and sports performance because common symptoms of iron-deficiency include fatigue and weakness.<sup>16</sup> It's also important to know that there are certain groups more at risk of iron deficiency, such as adolescent girls, endurance athletes, vegan/vegetarian athletes, and those with particular medical conditions. It's best to consult with your child's medical provider if you are concerned about their risk of a nutrient deficiency.

Given the importance of iron, athletes should aim to include iron rich foods in their sports nutrition meal plan.

There are two types of dietary iron sources that athletes should be aware of, heme and nonheme iron.<sup>15</sup> Heme iron is uniquely found in animal-source foods, particularly red meat, and is more readily absorbed by the body. Nonheme iron is found in primarily plant-based sources and fortified foods. It is less bioavailable and not absorbed by the body as well as heme iron.

### Sources of heme iron:

- Beef
- Chicken
- Turkey
- Seafood
- Pork

### Sources of nonheme iron:

- Dark green leafy vegetables
- Beans, legumes, nut, seeds
- Fortified foods such as breakfast cereal, bread, and grains

## Calcium

### Did You Know?

A 3-oz serving of beef provides 2.5 mg of iron.<sup>4</sup> Consuming lean cuts of beef as part of a well-balanced diet can support athletes with meeting their daily iron needs.

Calcium is an important mineral that provides the structural component for building strong bones.<sup>17</sup>

Athletes should aim to include several servings of calcium-rich foods in their meals and snacks throughout the day.

Calcium can be obtained in the diet from a variety of sources, including:

- Milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese
- Calcium-fortified orange juice, plant-based milks, breakfast cereals, and other foods
- Tofu, soybeans
- Chinese cabbage, kale, broccoli
- Sardines





## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is an important fat-soluble vitamin that has many important roles in the body. It is necessary for the absorption of calcium in the body and supporting optimal bone health.

In addition, Vitamin D is necessary for muscle function, transmitting nerve signals, reducing inflammation, and supporting a healthy immune system.<sup>18</sup>

Vitamin D can be made naturally by the body when the skin is exposed to UV sunlight. It also can be obtained from food in the diet, including:

- Milk fortified with Vitamin D
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Fortified plant-based milks
- Cod liver oil, trout, salmon
- Mushrooms exposed to UV light

## Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>

Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> is an important nutrient for athletes. It is necessary for the formation of red blood cells, the synthesis of DNA and RNA, the functioning of the nervous system, and energy production in the body.<sup>19</sup>

The only naturally occurring sources of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> come from animal foods. However, some breakfast cereals and nutritional yeast are fortified with Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>.<sup>19</sup>

### Did You Know?

Beef is an excellent source of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>. A 3-oz serving of lean beef provides 2.4 µg (micrograms) of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, which is 101% of the daily value, or the recommended daily amount.<sup>4</sup>

Dietary sources of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> include:

- Beef
- Poultry
- Pork
- Seafood
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Eggs
- Nutritional yeast
- Breakfast cereals

A deficiency of Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> can lead to anemia and fatigue in athletes; thus, ensuring adequate intake of this vitamin is important.



# Hydrate Right – Key Hydration Strategies for Athletes

Hydration is important for an athlete's health as well as sports performance. Despite the importance of hydration, many athletes start their workouts in a dehydrated state.<sup>19</sup>

Here are a few tips to help make hydration a daily priority:

## 1. Grab Your Water Bottle

When athletes head out the door in the morning, they should make sure to take a refillable water bottle with them. Having a water bottle ready and available serves as a great reminder for athletes to stay on top of their hydration needs.

## Hydrate with Meals and Snacks

Athletes should plan to consume a nutritious beverage with each meal and snack they eat during the day. Consuming fluid with meals and snacks can help athletes meet their daily hydration needs.

In addition to water, consider the following beverages athletes can enjoy with their meals and snacks:

- Low-fat milk
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice
- Unsweetened sparkling water
- Infused water

## 2. Enjoy Fruits and Vegetables with High-Water Content

In addition to providing vitamins and minerals, many fruits and vegetables contain a high-water content.

Adding a variety of fruits and vegetables with a high-water content to meals and snacks can help athletes meet their hydration needs.

Ideas for fruits and vegetables with a high-water content that athletes can add to their sports nutrition meal plan include:

- Watermelon
- Cantaloupe
- Strawberries
- Oranges
- Grapefruit
- Peaches
- Celery

- Cucumbers
- Tomatoes
- Bell Peppers
- Lettuce
- Squash and zucchini

## 3. Have a Hydration Plan for Activity

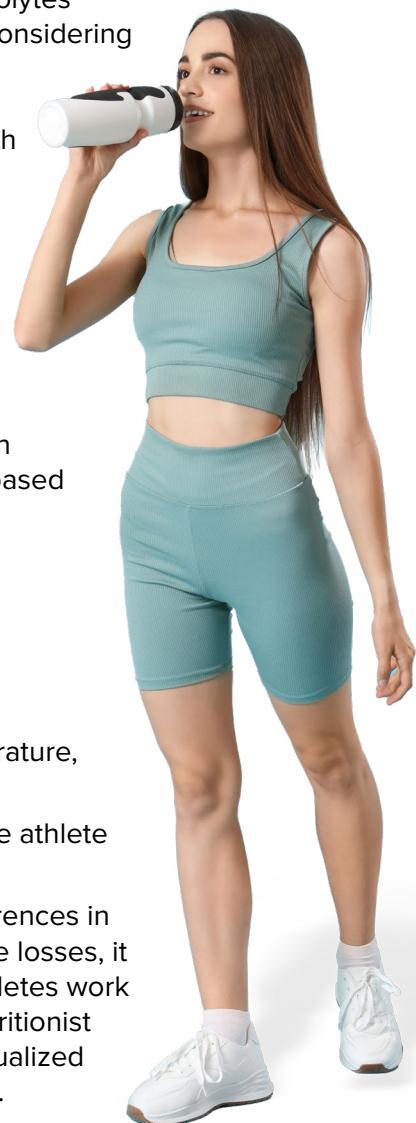
During activity, athletes sweat in order to remove heat from their bodies. When athletes sweat, they lose both fluid and electrolytes (namely sodium). When considering an athlete's hydration needs during activity, it is important to consider both fluid and electrolytes.

It is important to note that each athlete is unique in regard to the amount of fluid as well as electrolytes lost in sweat.

In addition, the amount an athlete sweats can vary based upon factors such as:<sup>20</sup>

- Type of exercise
- Exercise intensity
- Clothing or uniform
- Athlete's body size
- Environment (temperature, humidity)
- Acclimatization of the athlete to the environment

Based on individual differences in sweat rate and electrolyte losses, it is recommended that athletes work with a sports dietitian nutritionist on developing an individualized hydration plan for activity.



**Pro Tip:** If athletes like flavored water, they can add a few slices of cucumber, fresh berries, or a lemon wedge to their water bottle in the morning. Each time they refill their water bottle throughout the day the water will have a refreshing flavor.





## General Hydration Tips Before, During, and After Activity

Although the individual hydration needs of athletes vary, there are some general hydration tips for before, during, and after activity that athletes can follow.

### Hydration Before Activity

Approximately 4-hours prior to activity, athletes should aim to drink 5-7 mL of fluid per kg of body weight.<sup>21</sup>

For most athletes this calculates to be in the range of ~12-16 fl oz (1.5-2.5 cups) of fluid depending upon the athlete's weight and body type.

### Hydration During Activity

During activity it is important for athletes to replace the fluid and electrolytes lost in sweat. Although individual hydration needs vary, a general goal of consuming ~3-8 ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes of activity (0.4-0.8 L per hour) is often recommended.<sup>1,21</sup>

### Hydration Following Activity

Following activity, athletes need to rehydrate to replace the fluid and electrolytes lost in sweat.

Weighing before and after activity can help athletes determine how much fluid was lost in sweat during the exercise session. For each pound of weight lost during the activity, athletes should aim to drink 20-24 oz of fluid.<sup>1</sup>

Example: 2-pound weight loss during activity

$$2 \times 20 \text{ oz} = 40 \text{ oz (5 cups)}$$

$$2 \times 24 \text{ oz} = 48 \text{ oz (6 cups)}$$

Consuming sodium, in either food or beverages, following activity can help athletes with replacing the sodium lost in sweat. In addition, sodium helps athletes to better retain the fluid consumed after exercise.<sup>21</sup>

### Calculate Your Hydration Needs:

Body weight in pounds \_\_\_\_\_  $\div 2.2 =$   
\_\_\_\_\_ body weight in kg

Body weight in kg \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 5 \text{ mL} =$   
\_\_\_\_\_ mL of fluid

Body weight in kg \_\_\_\_\_  $\times 7 \text{ mL} =$   
\_\_\_\_\_ mL of fluid

*Convert to ounces by multiplying results in mL by 0.0338*

**Example: 165-pound athlete**

$$165 \text{ pounds} \div 2.2 = 75 \text{ kg}$$

$$75 \times 5 \text{ mL} = 375 \text{ mL of fluid} \quad \text{Convert to Ounces: } 375 \times 0.0338 = 12.68 \text{ fl oz}$$

$$75 \times 7 \text{ mL} = 525 \text{ mL of fluid} \quad \text{Convert to Ounces: } 525 \times 0.0338 = 17.75 \text{ fl oz}$$



Athletes can continue hydrating with water or a sports drink in the hour leading up to the competition. Athletes should be encouraged to consume another 8 oz of fluid during this time period.

**Pro Tip:** Drinking a big gulp of water or sports drink is equivalent to approximately 1 ounce of fluid. During activity athletes should aim to drink several big gulps of fluid every 15-20 minutes of activity or as competition allows.



# Smart Starts: Breakfast Strategies for Busy Athletes



Starting the day with a healthy breakfast is important for athletes. Regularly eating breakfast is associated with improved grades, cognitive function, and school attendance.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, consuming a breakfast that contains a good source of protein helps to promote improved satiety, mood, and perceived energy levels throughout the morning.<sup>23, 24</sup>

Despite its importance, breakfast is a meal often skipped as athletes rush to get out the door in the morning.

Having a variety of breakfast on-the-go ideas can help ensure that athletes start the day with a nutritious breakfast this school year.

- Overnight oats
- Fruit smoothie
- Greek yogurt and fruit parfait
- Cottage cheese with berries, breakfast bars
- Bagel breakfast sandwich with ham, egg, and cheese, apple slices
- Breakfast wrap with scrambled eggs and lean beef sausage, grapes
- Instant oatmeal with dried fruit and walnuts
- Toaster waffles with nut butter, banana slices, and honey
- Hard-boiled eggs, string cheese, and fig bars
- Beef sausage & egg muffin cups, granola bars, fresh sliced fruit

Athletes can pair their breakfast on-the-go with a nutritious beverage, such as low-fat milk or 100% fruit juice, to support their hydration needs.

## Make Time to Meal Prep

Since weekday mornings are often busy, athletes are encouraged to use weekends for meal prep. Even simple meal prep tasks can make a significant difference during hectic mornings.

Consider the following tasks:

- Hard-boil eggs
- Prepare overnight oats
- Chop fresh produce
- Package fruit, cereal, and nuts into individual serving containers
- Meal prep breakfast recipes, like Beef Sausage & Egg Muffin Cups or Beef Breakfast Sausage

## Featured Breakfast Recipe – Beef Sausage & Egg Muffin Cups

The Beef Sausage & Egg Muffin Cups can be a convenient breakfast on-the-go for busy athletes. Each muffin provides 25 grams of protein – making it a great way to add protein to your morning meal.

Athletes can pair the beef sausage & egg muffin cup with fresh fruit and granola bars for a quick breakfast on-the-go.

Visit [BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com](https://BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com) or [CLICK HERE](#), to view the recipe.



## Featured Breakfast Recipe – Basic Country Beef Breakfast Sausage Recipe

Try making this beef breakfast sausage recipe for an easy, protein-rich addition to a weekday meal. Each serving of the beef breakfast sausage provides 26 grams of protein.

The beef breakfast sausage crumbles can be prepared in advance and stored in the freezer for 3-4 months until ready for use.

Visit [BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com](https://BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com) or [CLICK HERE](#), to view the recipe.



# Pack Your Snacks – Balanced Snack Ideas for Athletes



Start the school year strong by planning ahead and packing nutritious snacks to stay energized throughout the day. Having the right foods available at the right times is a key component of sports nutrition success. Athletes are encouraged to create combo snacks by pairing a high-quality protein source with a carbohydrate-rich food to support performance and recovery.

Consider these sports nutrition snack combos to try this school year:

- Beef jerky with pretzels
- Greek yogurt with mixed berries and granola
- Crunchy granola bars topped with nut butter
- Hard-boiled eggs with breakfast bars
- Cottage cheese with pineapple
- Bagel with nut butter and sliced banana
- String cheese and fig bars
- Roast beef and cheese wrap
- Animal crackers and mixed nuts
- Whole grain breakfast cereal with high-protein milk

Foods Providing Protein	Foods Providing Carbohydrates
Beef jerky	Fresh fruit, frozen fruit, dried fruit
Lean deli meat: Roast beef, turkey, chicken, ham	Applesauce
Tuna fish, chicken salad	Fruit canned in 100% fruit juice
Shredded rotisserie chicken	Whole grain bread, wraps, tortillas
Hard-boiled eggs	Toaster waffles, bagels, English muffins
Sliced cheese, cheese sticks, cottage cheese	Whole grain cereal, granola, oatmeal
Low-fat milk, high-protein milk, Greek yogurt	Granola bars, breakfast bars, fig bars
Nuts, seeds, nut butter, seed butter	Baked tortilla chips, rice cakes
Hummus, low-fat bean dip	Pretzels, pita chips
Soy milk, tofu, edamame	Animal crackers, graham crackers

## Featured Snack Recipe – Beef Jerky Trail Mix

One of my favorite snack combinations for athletes is trail mix. Athletes can create their own trail mix with their favorite nuts, dried fruit, pretzels, and whole grain cereals. Trail mix is a great snack option for athletes to meal prep in advance. Athletes can simply create their favorite trail mix combination and package the mix into individual bags to enjoy throughout the week.

For a fun twist and added protein, try chopping up beef jerky to mix into your trail mix combo.

Visit [BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com](http://BeefItsWhatsForDinner.com) or [CLICK HERE](#), to view the recipe.



**Pro Tip:** Keep a snack basket in the pantry and refrigerator so athletes can quickly grab a variety of items to take with them on the way out the door.



# Building a Healthy Lunch for Athletes



Eating a healthy lunch is important for athletes. A well-planned lunch can help ensure athletes are fueled and ready to perform at their best during and after school for classes, practices and competitions.

Healthy lunches for athletes should include the following key components:

- Lean protein
- Whole grains
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Nutritious beverage

The good news is that lunch does not have to be a complicated meal to meet an athlete's sports nutrition needs.

Consider keeping some of the items below on hand to build healthy lunches this school year. Athletes can enjoy a different lunch each day by selecting from a variety of combinations of their favorite foods and beverages.

Some healthy lunch ideas for athletes include:

- Roast beef and cheese sub sandwich, pretzels, apple slices, 100% orange juice
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich, granola bars, banana, baby carrots, low-fat milk
- Turkey, spinach, avocado, and tomato wrap, animal crackers, pineapple chunks, unsweetened sparkling water
- Ham and cheese bagel sandwich, sliced melon, cherry tomatoes, water
- Hummus and vegetable wrap, celery sticks with nut butter, fresh berries, low-fat milk
- Tuna salad, whole grain crackers, fig bars, mandarin oranges, sugar snap peas, 100% apple juice
- Bento Box Lunch: Hard-boiled eggs, beef jerky, animal crackers, granola bars, grapes, cherry tomatoes, low-fat milk

Protein	Whole Grains	Fruits	Vegetables	Healthy Beverages
Roast beef, turkey, chicken, ham, tuna, beef jerky, hard-boiled eggs, nuts, nut butter, seeds, seed butter, Greek yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, hummus, edamame, tofu	Bread, bagels, wraps, tortillas, rolls, granola bars, crackers, pita chips, pretzels, brown rice, quinoa, pasta	Fresh, dried, canned in 100% fruit juice, applesauce	Baby carrots, celery sticks, cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices, mini peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, sugar snap peas, avocado	Water, low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice, unsweetened sparkling water, infused water

If athletes have access to a microwave, leftovers can also be a great school lunch option. Consider packing the following leftover meals to enjoy for lunch at school:

- Pasta with lean meat sauce or meatballs
- Beef chili with beans and brown rice
- Burrito bowl: Taco meat, brown rice, black beans, diced tomatoes, salsa, shredded cheese, guacamole
- Grain bowl: Grilled chicken, salmon, or steak, hard-boiled eggs, hummus, quinoa, roasted vegetables



# Easy Dinner Ideas for Athletes on Busy Weeknights



When the school year starts, evenings quickly fill-up with practices, competitions, and school events. Having a variety of simple dinner ideas that can support an athlete's sports nutrition needs can be of great help on busy weeknights.

Below are 6 easy weeknight dinner ideas to try this school year. With the meal, enjoy fresh sliced fruit, steamed vegetables, or a salad topped with a variety of fresh vegetables.

## #1 Burrito Bowl

Burrito bowls are always a fan-favorite amongst athletes. They are also an easy way for athletes to enjoy a nutritious dinner that provides both carbohydrates and lean protein.

Ideas for items to add to burrito bowl dinner include:

- Burrito Bowl Base — Brown rice, black beans, Romaine lettuce
- Lean Proteins — Grilled steak or chicken fajita, lean taco meat, shredded chicken
- Toppings — Guacamole or sliced avocado, grilled onions and peppers, pico de gallo, salsa, diced tomatoes, shredded cheese

To further boost the carbohydrate content of the meal, offer whole wheat tortillas alongside the burrito bowl.

## #2: Meatball Subs

Meatball subs can be a convenient weeknight meal that is enjoyed by the whole family. Prepare your own meatballs or purchase frozen, fully-cooked lean meatballs at the store to have on hand.

**Pro Tip:** In place of sour cream, consider using plain Greek yogurt as a topping on the chili. Swapping Greek yogurt for sour cream is an easy way to increase the protein and calcium content of the meal.



### Beef Confetti Taco Salad



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

Consider using this Beef Confetti Taco Salad recipe in your burrito bowl. Simply layer the beef mixture on top

of brown rice for a healthy dinner that supports an athlete's sports nutrition needs.

### Meatball Subs



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

Consider using this meatball recipe to build a quick and satisfying sub sandwich. Serve the meatballs on a whole grain roll with marinara sauce and a sprinkle of cheese for a balanced meal that supports an athlete's nutrition goals.

**Pro Tip:** Make sure to save the leftover meatballs to use as a protein topping on pasta later in the week.



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

### Beef Chili

Try out this heart-healthy beef chili recipe. The beef chili is great option for a protein-rich dinner

and the leftovers can make a nutritious lunch during the week.

# Easy Dinner Ideas for Athletes on Busy Weeknights



## #3 Baked Potatoes with Chili

Baked potatoes topped with chili can be a great way for athletes to enjoy a protein-rich, high-carb dinner. When preparing the chili, make sure to add in a variety of beans. The beans will boost the carbohydrate, fiber, and protein content of the chili.

For a fun twist, use the chili as a topping on a sweet potato. A sweet potato topped with chili is a great way for athletes to enjoy a sweet and savory meal packed full of nutrition.

## #4 Quesadilla

A grilled quesadilla is a go-to dinner on busy weeknights. I suggest purchasing pre-cooked, frozen steak or chicken fajita meat at the store to keep on hand for quesadillas.

Prepare your quesadillas on whole wheat tortillas for added fiber. Also consider adding black beans, diced tomatoes, bell peppers, and onions as fillings in the quesadilla before grilling.

Finally, top the quesadilla with guacamole and salsa for a quick and nutritious meal.

## #5 Pasta with Meat Sauce

Pasta with meat sauce is a reliable and satisfying option for busy weeknights. Keeping staples like pasta, pasta sauce, and lean ground beef on hand makes it easy to prepare a quick, nourishing meal. For added nutrition, consider using whole wheat, lentil, or chickpea pasta to boost the fiber and protein content of the dish—an easy upgrade to support an athlete's dietary needs.

**Pro Tip:** Consider storing your tortillas in the freezer so you have them available when needed for a quick evening meal.



## Crazy Beef Quesadillas



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

Try this twist on a classic quesadilla – made with ground beef, black beans, corn, and salsa. Great week night meal that athletes are sure to enjoy!

## Beef Meat Sauce



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

Try this beef meat sauce recipe made with lean ground beef and Italian-style tomatoes for a delicious, protein-rich sauce that you

can use in your favorite pasta recipes.

## Four-Way Slow Cooker Shredded Beef



[VIEW RECIPE](#)

Crockpot meals are an excellent way to make your meals go even further. Try this Four-Way Slow Cooker Beef and customize

for your family's tastes and preferences. Better yet, this recipe is great for leftovers the next day, which means you save time during the busy morning rush.

# Fuel Up for Game Day with these Sports Nutrition Tips



Be prepared for game day with these sports nutrition tips to fuel optimal performance.

## Pre-Game Meal

When possible, schedule your pre-game meal to be 3-4 hours prior to the start of the competition. The pre-game meal should provide a good source of carbohydrates and a moderate amount of protein.

Easy pre-game meal ideas include:

- Pancakes, scrambled eggs, fresh berries
- Fruit smoothie, oatmeal with raisins and walnuts
- Roast beef sub sandwich, pretzels, apple slices
- Grilled chicken breast, steamed rice, green beans, sliced melon, dinner rolls
- Pasta with marinara and lean meatballs\*, Italian bread, fresh fruit cup

\*Use the same lean meatballs from the subs



## Pre-Game Snack

When time is limited before the start of a game, choose an easy-to-digest, high-carbohydrate snack. Carbohydrates provide a quick source of energy to help fuel performance during the upcoming activity.

High-carb pre-game snack ideas include:

- Banana, small piece of fruit
- Applesauce squeeze pouch
- Dried fruit, fruit leather
- Pretzels, pita chips, snack crackers
- Low-fat granola bar, cereal bar, fig bar
- Sports drink, chews, or gel

## During Competition

Rehydrating with fluids and electrolytes and refueling with carbohydrates are top priorities. For sports with a halftime break, this is a key opportunity to replenish energy and hydration levels to maintain performance through the end of the event.



**Pro Tip:** Limit foods that are high in fat, fiber, and/or protein close to the start of the game. Eating foods high in these nutrients close to the start of activity may lead to GI distress during the competition.<sup>1</sup>



# Fuel Up for Game Day with these Sports Nutrition Tips



## Recovery Nutrition

Following a competition, athletes should have a plan in place to meet their recovery nutrition needs. Recovery nutrition is particularly important when athletes will be competing again the same day or the next.

The three key areas of recovery nutrition that athletes should focus on include:

- Rehydrate — Replace fluid and electrolytes lost in sweat
- Refuel — Consume carbohydrates to refill energy stores
- Build and Repair — Consume protein to build and repair muscles

## Post-Game Snacks

If it will be several hours until the next meal, make it a priority to eat a well-planned, post-game snack. To support an athlete's recovery nutrition needs, the snack should include a good source of carbohydrates, high-quality protein, and a healthy beverage.

Easy post-game snack ideas include:

- Low-fat chocolate milk and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- Beef jerky, pretzels, apple slices, 100% fruit juice
- String cheese, sliced deli meat, crackers, grapes, low-fat milk
- Greek yogurt and fruit parfait, 100% fruit juice
- Graham crackers with nut butter, low-fat milk
- Turkey and cheese wrap, sports drink



## Post-Game Meals

Follow-up with a post-game snack within the next couple of hours with a well-balanced meal. The post-game meal should include foods providing carbohydrates, high-quality protein, anti-inflammatory foods, as well as a nutritious beverage.



- Grilled Sirloin Steak, roasted new potatoes, green beans, whole grain dinner rolls
- Salmon filet, brown rice, fresh steamed broccoli, sliced melon
- Pasta with lean beef meat sauce, garden salad, breadsticks
- Burrito bowl with steak or chicken, brown rice, black beans, corn, salsa, guacamole
- Grilled chicken sandwich, baked sweet potato fries, fresh berries
- Beef and broccoli stir-fry with brown rice, wonton soup, fresh sliced fruit

# Essential Sports Team Snack List

## Snack Ideas to Fuel Optimal Performance

When planning snacks for a sports team, it can be helpful to have snack ideas that can help ensure athletes are fueled to perform at their best.

### Fruit

- Fresh Fruit
- Banana
- Grapes
- Apples, apple slices
- Mandarin oranges, orange wedges
- Pineapple chunks
- Mixed berries
- Sliced melon: watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew
- Dried Fruit
- Raisins, cranberries
- Cherries, strawberries
- Pineapple, mango, papaya
- Apple slices
- Applesauce squeeze pouches
- Fruit cups – select those packed in 100% fruit juice



### Pre-Packaged Snacks

- Beef jerky
- Trail mix
- Mixed nuts
- Animal crackers
- Graham crackers
- Granola bars
- Fig bars
- Breakfast bars
- Pretzels



- Pita chips
- Air popped popcorn
- Rice cakes
- Snack crackers
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
- Nut butter (single serving container/pouch)
  - » Great option to pair with apple slices, pretzels, or rice cakes
  - » Seed butter is a great option if there are athletes on the team with nut allergies

### Snacks for the Cooler

- Greek yogurt (single serving containers)
- Cheese sticks, string cheese
- Hummus (single serving container)
- Sliced fresh fruit
- Deli sandwiches/wraps

### Beverages

- Bottled water
- Sports drinks
- 100% fruit juice
- Low-fat milk
- Low-fat chocolate milk

### Snack Planning Reminders

- When planning snacks for a team, make sure to find out if any athletes on the team have food allergies. If unsure, make sure that all food items are clearly labeled with potential allergens.
- Perishable food, such as cheese, milk, yogurt, and sliced produce, should be held cold until the athletes will be eating the snack.
- Pack hand sanitizer for athletes to use prior to eating their snacks. This is especially important for outdoor events where athletes may not have access to a facility to wash their hands.

# Back to School with Sports Nutrition



## About the Author

Mandy Tyler is a Sports Dietitian Nutritionist in the San Antonio, TX area with over 15 years of experience. Mandy received her Master's Degree in Kinesiology from the University of Texas at Austin,

she is a Registered and Licensed Dietitian, a Board-Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics, a Licensed Athletic Trainer, and is a Certified Exercise Physiologist through the American College of Sports Medicine.

Mandy's education has provided her with a unique background tailored to understanding the specific needs of the elite athlete. She utilizes her educational background along with her passion for sports and fitness to provide sports nutrition consulting services to competitive athletes and teams.

Mandy teaches athletes the importance of nutrition combined with a proper training program to improve performance, prevent injury, and promote overall health and wellness. Mandy believes the key to reaching one's full potential, both in everyday life and in sports performance, relies on a healthy nutritional foundation.

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For more information and resources, sign up for the Sports Nutrition Game Plan.



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