



TOP 10 NUTRITION TIPS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

For young athletes to train regularly and compete they need to consume a diet that provides all key nutrients for growth, plus the additional energy requirement for training and competing.

1. There are no good or bad foods

Balance and moderation is the key. Young athletes should be encouraged to eat a wide variety of foods from a range of food groups to provide both the energy to train and compete but also for growth

2. Eat many different foods

Try new foods and new flavours as often as possible. You need to develop flexibility in your food choices to help prepare for travel and the unexpected. An athlete who restricts food choices and flavours potentially limits both the nutrient intake and the ability to be flexible when circumstances are challenging such as when travelling to attend international events and competitions

3. Drink fluids to keep hydrated

Use sports drinks when competing in the heat and humidity. Limit weight loss to less than 2% of body weight by monitoring body weight both before and after training sessions. A loss of 1kg requires a replacement of 1.5x (1.5 litres of fluid). Avoid over drinking to the level where excess body weight is gained. Sports drinks containing sodium are more efficient at restoring fluid balance and hydration status

4. Eat enough for growth

Expect height and weight to increase as this is a natural increase in bone and the muscles, tissues and blood supply that must support the structure of the body. Growth is individual and will vary widely among athletes

5. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables

Aim to eat at least 5 or more servings daily of different colours as these provide key nutrients for growth and sports performance. Eating fruit and vegetables regularly provides the body with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants for growth and performance. Use a range of fresh, frozen and dried

6. Regular meals and snacks are important

Breakfast is especially important as are snacks after training or competitions. Breakfast restores the body's fuel stores after an overnight fast and provides key nutrients for growth for the young athlete including calcium, protein, fibre, vitamin C and fluid

7. Choose snacks wisely

Treat foods are suitable now and again rather than daily. Snacks provide valuable energy for the athlete growth and performance. High fat treats are for special occasions and eaten away from training and competitions.

8. Eat enough foods rich in iron and calcium for growth & development

These are two key nutrients for the growth which also have key roles in sports performance. The diet intake of these nutrients could be low in young females and some males.

9. Sugar has a role but use it wisely

Rely on the natural sweetness in food. Add extra sugar only where additional energy is needed in meals.

10. Balance eating with growth and activity

Young athletes need more energy for growth compared to adults and have higher protein needs at this time. To avoid undesirable weight gain activity is important to balance.