



OUTDOOR SPORTS

By Owen Rothstein

Away with the heavy blankets and layered clothing! Let the pale skin and Seasonal Affective Disorder be gone! Throw open the windows and doors, for spring has sprung and summer draws near! That's right, we've made it through another ugly winter and all the glory of the warmer seasons lay in front of us. Typically, with the change of seasons comes a dramatic increase in activity levels, especially in young people. Even those of us working the 9-5 grind manage to get out for an occasional game of golf, tennis or even a hike in the warmer weather. Even if it is just the voluntary (read: mandatory) company softball game, we just move more when it's warm.

This increased activity is accompanied by some increased dietary requirements. Let's assume that you're starting from a sensible, balanced, nutritious diet (you are, right?). You eat lots of fruits and vegetables, a considerable amount of clean protein and a good amount of "healthy" fat. Most of the carbohydrates that you consume are slow-absorbing low-glycemic carbs, except (of course) for your post-workout Recovery meal. You tend to graze throughout the day, eating 5-7 "meals" and all three macronutrients (protein, carbs & fat) are present for each one. If this is the case, you're way ahead of the curve and have a great base to build on for all of the outdoor sports on the horizon.

The key to getting the best nutrition for activities like a baseball game or a long bike ride is to balance sustained energy foods without making yourself feel overly-full and weighed-down. Few things are more miserable than having to run around on a warm day and feeling like you have a brick in your belly. A solution can be to focus on whole-grains for you or your little athlete. You're probably already off of the simple carbs - like cookies and bagels - but avoiding them before activity can be particularly important now. Whole-grain foods contain all three parts of the grain (bran, the germ & endosperm) and fiber. The fiber is important for summer athletes because it helps slow down carbohydrate absorption and provides lasting energy. Simple carbohydrates like those in white breads, cookies and pasta are more quickly converted to sugar (which means faster energy) but cause a sugar crash later. [The latest science suggests that the traditional model of pre-tournament/race carbohydrate loading may not be the best strategy].

For those bursts of faster energy, remember that there is a big difference between "fruit" snacks and an actual apple or orange. Fresh blueberries, for instance, are full of good carbohydrates, fiber, and Vitamin C. Some blueberry flavored fruit snacks, on the other hand, actually have very few blueberries in them and use blueberry juice concentrate to get the flavor and color. You can't go wrong with a few bananas, pears, or pineapple slices during half-time and watermelon is also a fantastic summer snack for athletes because it has so much water for hydration.

Utilizing naturally low-fat, protein-rich foods can help keep you fueled without weighing you down when it's warm out. Low-fat protein options like plain Greek yogurt, turkey, and eggs are a great source of good fats, vitamins and protein. If you are traveling to an away tournament or even

a picnic, it's always good to pack a few low-fat options in a cooler; you never know what kind of food will be around and you don't want to rely on options at a fast-food restaurant or convenience store. Of course, don't forget to drink that Recovery shake with whey or a plant-based protein...it'll make all the difference in keeping your body strong and lean.

One of the most important factors in keeping yourself healthy and at peak performance during any activity is hydration. This is especially important during the warmer months. Your first inclination may be to grab a big bottle of neon-colored sports drink, but wait! Those sports drinks, though sometimes good because they contain electrolytes like sodium and potassium (which we lose when we sweat) also contain heavy doses of sugar. Make sure to drink plenty of water before a practice or game and keep drinking throughout. Keep extra water bottles in your sports bag or in the trunk of your car so you're never without water.

A surprising tip, believe it or not, is that low-fat chocolate milk has everything a summer athlete needs after a hard practice or game. It has the right carb to protein ratio for optimal recovery and is packed full of good nutrients like calcium. Low-fat milk might have a little added sugar in it, but it's far less than the amount of sugar that is usually added to sports drinks and definitely better for athletes than soda. Whatever your solution (pun intended), hydrate, hydrate, hydrate! Don't depend on your thirst level as an indicator of your hydration level. Drink at least 8oz. of water for every hour of activity - that's on top of the 8oz./hour you should already be drinking!

We hope to see you soon on a nice sunny day - out on the field, the track or the park. If you do run into us, we've probably got a spare yogurt or bottle of water with us. If you need one, just ask.



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