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10 Smart Snacks for Athletes

"I don't need to worry about what I eat...I burn off so many calories it doesn't matter." "If I start to feel hungry, I just grab whatever I can get my hands on."

As a sports nutritionist, these are typical athlete statements that I hear all the time. If only they were true...

While we all need nutritious food everyday to fuel our busy lives and to keep us healthy, if you're in training for a race or event, it's even more important to make sure your food choices count nutritionally.

One of the most common mistakes athletes make is to believe that they can eat just about anything they want. Nothing could be further from the truth. Active people can eat more calories than those who are more sedentary but that doesn't mean they can eat and drink "junk" (foods and beverage with little to no nutritional value) without paying the price. In fact, many pros say that their major breakthroughs happened when they started paying close attention to what and when they ate and drank.

Physical fitness increases energy requirements and protein needs and the requirements for some vitamins and minerals. For most active people, all those additional energy and nutrient needs can be met by eating a nutrient-rich diet. While it's fairly easy to eat a balanced meal, many of us reach for glass of chocolate milk whatever is convenient for a snack. Since snacks account for a significant proportion of our total diet, it's important to make the most of those between-meal noshes.

Here's a guide to 10 great sports snacks from Christine Rosenbloom, Ph.D., R.D., CSSD, a leading sports dietitian who has worked with age-group, collegiate and professional athletes for more than twenty years.

Almonds

1 ounce (23 almonds) provides 170 calories, 6 g protein, 3.5 g fiber, 75 mg calcium and 7.4 mg Vitamin E (highest of all nuts), antioxidants and heart healthy fats.

Cereal & Milk & Fruit

A whole-grain cereal paired with low-fat milk and fruit provides carbohydrates and protein, along with



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Physical fitness increases energy requirements and protein needs and the requirements for some vitamins and minerals. For most active people, all those additional energy and nutrient needs can be met by eating a nutrient-rich diet. While it's fairly easy to eat a balanced meal, many of us reach for a glass of chocolate milk or whatever is convenient for a snack. Since snacks account for a significant proportion of our total diet, it's important to make the most of those between-meal noshes.

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A whole-grain cereal paired with low-fat milk and fresh fruit provides carbohydrate and protein, along with vitamins and minerals. Choose a cereal that has the "whole grain" seal, and has at least 3 grams of fiber per serving. Top with fresh fruit.



Greek Yogurt with Fruit

Nonfat or low-fat Greek yogurt is thicker than other yogurt and contains more protein per serving (up to 23 grams of protein per cup) but slightly less calcium than regular yogurt. Top with fresh fruit.

Fig or Date Bars

Athletes like cookies and these two contain some nutritional value; complex carbs and the benefits of dried fruits like figs, dates and raisins to boost fiber. These are good post-work out snacks to replenish muscle glycogen.

Fresh fruit paired with low-fat cheese Apple or pear slices with a couple of ounces of reduced-fat cheese, like Cabot Vermont 50% reduced fat jalapeno cheese or Laughing Cow Mini Babybel Light provides protein, calcium and the natural sugars and fiber of fresh fruit

Low fat chocolate milk

Low fat chocolate milk is a hot sports recovery drink and many teams are using it after a workout to provide high quality protein and carbohydrates to stimulate muscle growth. Milk provides nine essential nutrients, 160 calories and 8 grams of protein in 8 ounces (1 cup).

Peanut Butter Sandwich

Peanut butter on whole grain bread is a high energy, tasty, portable snack. Peanut butter has heart healthy fat and is high in protein.

Pistachios

1 ounce of pistachios is 49 nuts—the most nuts per serving and low in calories with 160. Also high in fiber, vitamin B-6, and phytonutrients leutein and zeaxanthin.

Popcorn sprinkled with Parmesan cheese

Low-fat microwave popcorn is whole grain snack; when sprinkled with 2 Tablespoons of grated Parmesan cheese this snack adds protein and 120 mg of calcium.

Trail mix

The key to this healthy snack is keeping the portions in check and finding or making a trail mix with dried fruit, nuts, seeds and whole grain cereal. Avoid the trail mix with candy pieces to reduce fat.

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