

# SPORTS NUTRITION



from DAN'S  
HAND

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Does nutrition play a role in sports performance? You betcha! Nutrition is an important part of the equation; if you make mistakes with your diet, you watch your performance tank, not to mention you'll never lose those stubborn 8 pounds from your love handles. Nutrition and training are the only two factors that you alone have complete control over, yet most pay little attention to the most important part of that duo—nutrition. We humans have evolved over 3.4 million years converting certain compounds that occur in nature into muscle, bones, organs, glands and brains. We are simply the interactions of these nutrients. Every time you screw around with them, they'll screw around with you.

Though every human is different from their heads to their toes, if he or she is active and engaged in a sport where exercise is required, that person can consider him or herself an athlete. An athlete can be a 4th grade soccer player or a professional football player. They can range from under 75 pounds to over 300 pounds, 4' to 7' tall. They can play in a league or just workout in a gym.

Chances are if you are reading this, you are an athlete. Athletes who scarf down fat-loaded burgers and nutrient-poor fries do not understand how much they are disturbing the exquisite precision of nutrient use of their bodies. All athletes require sound nutrition to excel and believe it or not, the nutritional needs within a given sport are surprisingly similar. Age, gender, body size, and training schedule determine an athlete's dietary needs and while some variations exist in nutrient requirements, the variance in energy requirement is even greater.

### Calorie Requirements

This question is complicated and unless you write down your food intake religiously, you may never really know what your true calorie requirement is. To further complicate things, every activity will use a different amount of calories in a given period; throw in age, gender, body size, metabolic profiles and intensity levels, and you see why most folks just shrug their shoulders and give up. Let's make it simple:

Activity Level	Male	Female
Light	17	16
Moderate	19	17
Heavy	23	20
Very Heavy	26	23

Just determine your activity level and multiply the factor by your weight in pounds. This number will give you your daily calories needed to maintain your weight and to best succeed in your activity. Remember though, this is only an estimate and should be used as your personal starting point. Because of all the reasons I mentioned earlier, you will have to adjust your calories up or down to meet the demand you place on yourself. Use your weight loss or gain as an indicator; then invest in a set of fat calipers and test yourself biweekly to determine if the changes in your body are due to muscle gain or fat loss.

### All Calories Are Not the Same

Okay, so maybe it's not as easy as just getting your calories right—you really need to know where they're coming from too. Every sport or activity requires a different ratio of macronutrients and micronutrients to satisfy the stresses placed on your body.

For instance, a swimmer who trains for the 100-yard backstroke may need their mix of macros coming from 55% carbs, 30% protein and 15% fat while an endurance swimmer, who swims in events lasting longer than 20 minutes, would need a mix of about 60-15-25 respectively. Having the right ratios of macros will fuel your body's energy system with the right forms of energy.

**Note** – It is important to understand that the government's Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) of essential nutrients is just enough to prevent dietary deficiencies. Athletes require far more nutrition than what the RDA recommends. If you use the RDAs to plan your nutrition, you will never reach your athletic potential.

### Time to Focus

Take a little time each day to understand what foods you are eating and how they play a roll in helping you achieve your performance goals. Don't waste time day after day, month after month never getting to the next level. Take control of your body. Nutrition is 80% of the battle.

Eat Well!

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