

Creating a successful nutritional environment

First thing, how many of us plan out our daily meals? How many of us sit down and plan out meals for our young athletes? How many athletes plan out their daily intake? I have been a nutritionist dealing with athletes now for almost 8 years and very few people and families do!

What typically happens is something like this... the athlete gets up has a small bowl of cereal, fruit bar, maybe a cereal bar, a small piece of fruit or my favorite is they skip breakfast all together and off they go. Their mid-morning snack, there what? Who? ...exactly most athletes skip this meal all together. On to lunch, this can consist of a wide variety of selections from sandwiches from home, cafeteria food, pre-packaged foods, to cans of soup and everything in-between. Mid-Afternoon snack... well like the mid-morning snack this falls by the way-side, then depending on practices, games and other activities, we see a very large consumption of food in the late afternoon through to bed, making up the greatest bulk of the athletes caloric intake. Ok let's review; after sleeping through the night, the athlete wakes up with low blood amino acid concentrations, as well as low blood sugar then consumes a high sugar low protein meal, doesn't eat again until noon, where they consume carbohydrates which are typically processed with a small serving of either fruit or vegetables and a small serving of protein again usually processed. During activity, practice, workouts or competition the athlete typically just consumes water or worse they don't even do that!! Then the athlete consumes the majority of their daily intake during the later part of the day, and because of the fluctuating blood sugar levels they tend to consume high amount of simple carbohydrates and various forms of junk food.

Before we continue here are some interesting points:

Studies at Georgia State University demonstrate that hourly energy balance is at least as important as total daily energy balance and should remain as close to neutral as possible throughout each of the 24 hours. What does this mean, well having well balanced meals that offer up approximately the same number of calories at each meal is just as important as the total number of calories we intake each day.

A fair number of sport athletes have been shown to be deficient in a host of vitamins and minerals, leading to impairments in nervous system function, metabolic processing, and oxygen delivery/consumption. It's hard to get the requisite amount of vitamins and minerals in only one or two meals. Now, this doesn't mean that athletes should start popping multi-vitamins. What this means is are re-focusing of our daily intake towards fruits and vegetables, and not just at one or two meals but at EVERY meal.

Now let's get started on correcting this and getting the athlete, both young and old on the right track to nutritional excellence. First off both athletes young and old need meals that are easy and quick in the morning as most like the rest of us are on the run and busy. Here are a few examples of quick and easy breakfast meals:

Breakfast shake

Dry oatmeal
Greens supplement
Yogurt
Protein powder
Fresh or frozen fruit
Peanut butter
Blend together

Breakfast Mush (it tastes great and is one of my personal favorites)

Dry oatmeal
Yogurt
Frozen berries
Protein Powder
Greens Supplement
Mix this together using enough yogurt to make a mush like mixture

Speedy Omelet Sandwich

4-5 egg whites

1 whole egg

A little cheese

Various veggies (green, red and yellow peppers, broccoli, etc.)

Mix above place in microwave for 2-3 min (depending on microwave)

2 pieces of whole grain toast or toasted whole grain bagel

Glass of OJ with a greens supplement in it

Place cooked omelet on the bread or bagel and there's your sandwich

Now make sure to mix these meals up and when you have the time, make your self a good sit down breakfast, using eggs, maybe some whole wheat pancakes, fresh fruit, lean turkey bacon, or lean chicken sausage. Sometimes I hear I'm not hungry in the morning, well sure if you have been skipping breakfast or having a breakfast that consists of small amounts of food your body will adapt to this, so yes for the first few weeks you might feel a little full but have no fear just like your body adjusted to not eating it will adjust to eating, and I let you guess which one is better for us!!!

On to the snacks, now we normally have snacks that are full of processed carbohydrates, and artificial ingredients, we need to change this. Here are a few examples of easy, quick and healthy snacks:

Snack shake

Fruits (fresh or frozen)

Protein powder

Yogurt

Flax seed oil or other essential fatty oil blend like UDO's

Snack Mush

Cottage cheese

Frozen berries

Mixed nuts

Protein powder

Or

Yogurt

Protein powder

Banana

Peanut butter

Ground up flax seeds

Easy and quick

Fresh veggies

Humus dip

Hard boiled egg

Every time we eat we should be making sure that we get fruits and vegetables, good carbohydrates, good fats and high quality protein, this rule includes snacks. Now on to lunch, this is one of the easiest meals to fix. Simple plan: double up on dinner!!! We can pack this in small Ziploc containers and if needed heat up before we consume. Other ideas:

Chicken Sandwich

Chicken breast (sliced up)

Small piece of cheese

Alfa sprouts

Slice of tomato

On the side

Mixed nuts

Mexican Tuna

Brown rice

Tuna

Salsa

Sunflower seeds

Celery (chopped up)

Green or red pepper (chopped up)

Ground flax seed

Mix this all together in a Ziploc container and heat before eating

This is a good example of a dish that you can make 2 – 3 servings of; just add more tuna so retain the same ratio

Pasta salad extreme

Whole wheat pasta

Chicken Breast (cut up)

Green, Red and Yellow peppers diced

Broccoli (sliced)

Italian Dressing

Ground flax seed

Olive oil

This is a great dish cold or hot

This is a good example of a dish that you can make 2 – 3 servings of; just add more chicken so you retain the same ratio

Now lets have a look at dinner, this is the one meal that we do usually eat a fairly well balance meal. Having said that here are a few suggestions to help improve your dinner selections:

- Add a variety of beans and lentils as this will add some good fiber to your diet
- Always use whole grain versions of foods instead of the processed version
- ALWAYS include vegetables with this meal
- Have fresh fruit or fruit smoothies for dessert

Now that we know how to improve our daily intake, let's look at some strategies to help us create a positive nutritional environment for us and our young athletes. In both cases we want to make meal choice as easy as possible, so when we go to eat or pack our lunches we are not needing to make or cook a whole lot of things. How do we do this Drew I'm so busy, I don't have the time? Now I have heard this line and reasons like it a lot, how many of us watch 2-3 hours of T.V. a night? Why are we tired in the first place...maybe because our nutrition intake isn't up to par? Pick one or two nights a week and this is the night or nights that you make meal ingredients like brown rice and whole wheat pasta, cook up 4-5 chicken breasts, or lean roast, we cut up various fresh veggies like carrots, celery and peppers. This will allow us to make the right choices when we go to the fridge and pack our lunch or need a healthy snack.

EMPOWERING

I love that word and it's meaning when dealing with younger athletes! I'm a father of two and I have heard just like all the other parents, Mom, Dad I can do it, or I'll get it... our children want to do things on their own! They want to feel like they have accomplished something, they want to take on responsibility! So I say let them, let them go into the fridge and pick out there own snack or even make there own lunches the night before. Now before you all say there going to have cookies and chocolate bars for lunch and nothing else, wait what did I tell you about earlier? We have taken the time to make up and place in the fridge healthy choices so yes the athletes get to choose but we have limited their choices to healthy ones! So now they not only feel good about making their own snacks and packing their own lunches or making their dinners, we as parents know that they are eating healthy. Now Drew this sound good, but my kids are still going to eat out of the snack cupboard... they are still going to have the chocolates and chips and junk. Really, why are they even in the house, does it make us feel better as parents or ease our conscious when Timmy or Suzy whine that they want sweets? We send them into the kitchen and tucked away in a corner are these "treats"? Now I'm not saying our house should be completely devoid of every sweet, but instead of chips how about whole grain crackers, or instead of chocolate bars, small servings of really chocolate, or what's wrong with apples, pears, and banana's as tasty snacks? Our athletes of all ages and truth be told just about all of us need to eat healthier and indulge our sweet tooth less! Some of you are going to say to me well my young athlete won't eat then!! If you and the rest of the house hold adopt these suggestions and ways the athlete, young or old will adopt them and follow along as well, especially when they see and feel all the positive effects of what eating well can do or us!!!

For further information regarding these and other healthy eating techniques, please contact me at:

Drew Robertson

Ph: 403.813.0075

Email: drew@evolvednutrition.com