

# Nutrition



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# Soccer Nutrition

Making the most of your nutrition as an athlete



**Hello!** If you are reading this that means you have taken the first (and maybe most important) step on your path to improving your performance as an athlete. Many people underestimate the power of nutrition and the impact it can have on one's athletic capabilities but the truth is - without nutrition our bodies cannot function the way that they should. From sports, to school, to growing, to being able to live a long and healthy life, the things we choose to put in our bodies have complex and important roles to play. For example, new research is starting to show that a healthy diet may even be useful for helping improve certain mental health issues, like depression.

You're here because you want to learn how to get stronger, fitter and faster as an athlete and almost certainly you are putting in the work on the field. However, putting in work off of the field is just as important. I'm sure your coaches have spoken to you about the importance of stretching, rest, recovery, drinking enough water etc. Nutrition is another one of these "off-field" factors that is just as important.

In the following pages (please take the time to read them carefully) you will learn about the science of eating as an athlete and how this relates to you. You will find information to help you include the best foods that you can in your diet so that you can start building these habits now. Research has shown that athletes who adopted good nutrition habits at a younger age find it easier and actually enjoy healthy eating well into their competitive years and usually find more success. Living a healthy lifestyle is about more than just occasionally eating a salad or skipping a soft drink on Tuesdays. It is a culmination of choices that you make every single day but with pleasure. It may be hard at

first but once you start feeling the benefits of an improved diet - I promise you won't want to turn back. Now, don't worry, this doesn't mean you can't ever have sweets or KFC ever again - healthy living is all about balance and there is definitely room for less healthy choices in your diet (just not every day).

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope it is useful and that you learn as much as you can. Please do not hesitate to pass on any questions you may have and I will do my best to answer them. Finally, remember nutrition is not one size fits all - what works for you may not work for others and what works for others may not work for you. The key here is to find as many changes that you can make that are EASY and ENJOYABLE for you to stick to over the long term. Success here is all about consistency.

## The Basics

The foundation of nutrition is macro- and micro-nutrients. Macronutrients are nutritional compounds that your body needs certain amounts of for daily functioning. Each type supplies you with the energy you need to live but also has individual uses in your body.

### **Carbohydrates:**

Carbohydrates, or carbs for short, contain 4 calories per gram. But what is a calorie? Calories in food provide energy in the form of heat so that our bodies can function and our bodies store and "burn" calories as fuel.

Carbohydrates are the most important type of fuel for endurance athletes like soccer players. This is because during intense exercise like sprinting, carbohydrates are the only fuel that is able to give the body energy fast enough. Furthermore, the ability to sprint at the end of a game/training session relies on your carbohydrate stores too.

It is true that the body can use fat for fuelling lower intensity activities too but carbohydrates are what allow this action to happen in the first place.

Equally important is that the brain uses glucose as its fuel - which comes from carbohydrates. This means if you do not have enough fuel in your body your ability to make SMART decisions in a game will be impaired.

It is important to note that you cannot just eat carbohydrates on game day and expect that to be enough. Your preparation for a game or an intense training session should be occurring everyday - this is why habits are so important. The average person has about 2000 calories of stored carbohydrate in their body - if you don't eat enough carbs you won't have this much stored and might not have enough energy to play well in a big game.

**Fat:**

Fat contains more energy per gram than carbohydrates - it has 9 calories per gram of fat which makes it a good source of fuel for long activities. It is not burnt during intense activity like sprinting but your body does use it to power other exercise like jogging and walking. More than that, it is important for protection to vital organs like your heart and lungs. However not all fat is equal and you want to make sure you are eating enough of the RIGHT kinds of fat.

Saturated fat:

These are found in foods like red meat, egg yolks, cheese and butter. Saturated fats are associated with being a cause of heart disease and diabetes, no more of 10% of your diet should come from saturated fat so try to get this fat from healthier sources like meat and eggs as opposed to unhealthy sources like butter and store bought cookies and cakes. There will be more information later on about healthy swaps that you can make!

Unsaturated fat:

These are healthier fats that can lower the risk of heart disease. This is found in foods like olive oil, avocados, almonds and pecans. They provide good protection against disease and you should aim to have one serving of fat with every meal. (More on serving sizes later)

**Protein:**

Protein is absolutely essential for anyone involved in intense and hardcore training. Protein is used by your body for the growth and repair of skin, hair, bones, ligaments and muscles. Competitive athletes that are training hard require more protein than the average person - especially if they are trying to gain muscle.

As you will learn later on - proteins should make up 20-35% of your diet. All proteins are composed of combinations of twenty different amino acids, which your body breaks apart and combines to form different physical structures, like your hair and nails. Your body uses amino acids in three main ways: **to build new proteins for cellular functioning, as an energy source, and as a building material.**

Of all the twenty amino acids, nine are classified as essential. This means that your body can't create them on it's own and you need to take them in through food. If you follow a non-vegetarian diet, you will get all essential amino acids through animal products. Those who eat a plant-based diet instead can also meet their amino acid needs by eating a well-balanced diet that consists of multiple plant-based sources of protein like nuts, legumes, and whole grains.

**Micronutrients:**

The other aspect of nutrition is micronutrients and they are the vitamins and minerals. I won't go into too much detail but it is important to know that vitamins are used for energy production, immune function, blood clotting and more. Minerals are used for growth, bone health, fluid balance and more. If you are eating a balanced diet and consuming at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables every day - you will be getting the micronutrients that you need. You may already be taking a multivitamin too!

**The Soccer Player's Diet:**

A typical western diet contains too much fat and not enough healthy, whole grain carbohydrates and protein. Soccer players should aim to make 60-65% of their diet WHOLE GRAIN carbohydrates with an emphasis on fresh fruit, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, potato and high fibre cereals.

About 20-25% of the calories should come from fat and this should be in the form of good fats found in oily fish like mackerel and salmon, olive oil and avocado.

Protein should make up the remaining 15-20% of the diet and come from fish, poultry, low fat milk and lean red meat for example.

Moving through this document you can choose to think about portions in terms of grams/ounces consumed, calories, percentages or simply portion of space taken up on the plate. Here are some quick guidelines:

**Portion:** Each plate should have 1/4 protein, 1/4 carbs and 1/2 veggies when training less hard or else 1/2 carbs and 1/4 veggies when training vigorously.  
Add one oz of fat to each meal.

**Percentages:** 55-70% food from carbohydrates, 15-20% from lean proteins, 20-35% from healthy fats

**Calories** (Using a 2000 calorie diet): 400 calories from protein (100 calories of a protein source at each meal), 400 calories from fat (4oz of olive oil spread throughout the day for example), 1,200 calories from grains/fruit/veg.

**Remember these are all approximations and it will take trial and error to figure out what works for you. For the older athletes I will detail macros for you later in the document.**

## A Food Plan FOR YOU

Okay, now that you understand the different aspects of nutrition as they stand for everyone, it is important to remember that you are not just an average individual. You are an athlete, specifically, a soccer player and that has to be taken into account when you are determining the way that you eat and fuel your body. Soccer is an extremely physically demanding sport - during a ninety minute game an athlete can burn anywhere from 1500 to 2000 calories. Vigorous training increases the **energy demands** of amateur and professional soccer players. If you are not supplementing your training with adequate nutrition you increase the risk of impairing your training status - meaning you aren't getting the results that you should! Whilst you aren't playing any games right now because of quarantine, you are going to be training hard and that still requires a higher energy intake than most people.

For the older athletes I have used an online formula to calculate a rough estimate for how many calories they should be consuming and how many grams of protein, fat and carbohydrates that should be eating. I have not done this for younger athletes like yourselves for a few reasons:

1. As a young athlete the amount of energy that you burn in a day is extremely variable and any miscalculation could cause harm to your growth.
2. It is not necessary for young teenagers to count calories so specifically and research shows it can encourage harmful behaviours later on.
3. You can get great benefits at this age by simply making healthy swaps and become more conscious of the best ways to fuel your body. This makes good habits that will help you later on in life and it teaches you to be aware of your body and how to listen to what it needs.



## Top tips for winning nutrition:

- ☑ Eat three kinds of food at meals. This means not just eating pasta and potatoes (which are both carbohydrates). This a great tip because the more kinds of foods you eat at one meal the more vitamins and minerals you get.
- ☑ Choose food in their natural state - it is super convenient to grab a glass of orange juice but much healthier if you grab an orange itself. A banana rather than an energy bar, whole-wheat bread rather than white bread. Baked potatoes rather than french fries. Foods that are minimally processed have higher nutritional value and usually less unhealthy additives too!
- ☑ Key word : moderation. Rather than trying to make your diet 100% perfect, aim for 80% healthy choices and 20% foods with fewer nutrients. There is no such thing as a bad food. Using words like "bad" can induce guilt around eating and you should never feel guilty about eating any food. Even soda and chips or KFC can fit into a nourishing and healthy diet, if desired.
- ☑ Avoid getting repetitive. It can be easy to say, "Okay I want to eat healthier so I am going to eat bran flakes, banana and milk every day for breakfast, a salad for lunch and pasta with chicken for dinner. Seven days a week. " The problem with doing that is you often don't get everything you need from a set 10-15 foods. This can lead to fatigue and inadequate nutrition. Try have as much variety in your diet as possible - this could be as simple as eating a different fruit every morning.

## US Health Guidelines

Every few years the United States government shares some guidelines and recommendations for nutrition based on current research. The key takeaway from it's most recent release is that we should eat a large amount of nutrient-dense foods and reduce our intake of processed foods with less nutritional value. I thought I would include the portion size suggestions here for your reference (Taken from Nancy Clark Sports Nutrition Book) :

- Fruit: 1 1/2 cups of fruit or juice per day. This is easy—a refreshing smoothie with a banana, berries, and orange juice will do that job.
- Vegetables: 2 1/2 cups (about 400 g) per day with a variety of colours. A big bowlful of salad with tomato, peppers, carrots, and baby spinach fulfils the vegetable requirement, no sweat.
- Grains: 6 ounces (175 g) of grain foods, of which at least half are whole grain. Examples include: One ounce = one slice bread or 1/2 cup cooked pasta or rice.
- Dairy: 3 cups (720 ml) of low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt. One and a half ounces (60 g) of natural cheese = 1 cup of milk

- Meat and alternatives: five one-ounce equivalents. One ounce (28 g) of meat is equal to 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, or 1/2 ounce of nuts. This translates into a small portion of a protein at two meals per day. Obviously there are other options here if you are vegetarian or vegan.

Keep in mind that these are suggestions for the average individual. Athletic teenagers will often need more grains and more sources of protein to account for the demands exerted by their sports. There will be more information to follow about the best sources of the previously mentioned categories.

For the next section I am going to break the macronutrients down into 3 categories: carbohydrates, protein and fat. Within each subtype there will be information on the following: **Sources, Serving Sizes and Healthy Swaps**

Once I have outlined that information for each macronutrient I will conclude this section with a comparison of how you are eating now to how you COULD be eating and make an example plan for you. Remember also that whilst something may be a carb (like a piece of bread) it also has protein in it. It is hard to categorise food into clear boxes because many contain protein and fat or fat and carbs. Dairy, is often a source of protein and fat, for example, so make sure you keep that in mind.

Let's get started!

## Carbohydrates:

### Sources:

Remember that about 50-60% of your daily intake should be from carbohydrates. This may seem like a lot but it covers a very wide variety of foods. To get enough carbohydrate to fuel your muscles, carbohydrates should always be the base of your meal. You can do this by eating a serving or two of carbs at each meal, for example, one bowl of cereal, two slices of bread, 1 cup of rice etc. Most active people will often need to double their carbohydrate serving sizes and this is okay! There are several different sources this can come from:

#### Whole grains and Starches

- Whole breads, cereals and grains are the base of a balanced diet - especially a high-activity and high-performance sports diet.
- They are great sources of carbohydrate, fibre and B vitamins, fuelling your muscles, preventing muscle fatigue and reducing problems with constipation.
- Popular culture likes to tell you that carbohydrates from grains are fattening but they are not. Eating in a calorie excess is fattening.



- Often the issue is, is that people eat many unrefined grains - white bread, cookies and products made with white flour. This process of refining the grain removes the fibre, antioxidants and minerals.
- Fruits and vegetables:
- Vegetables are technically carbohydrates and they contribute important energy to the foundation of your sport diet. They are also essential sources of vitamins and minerals.
- Fruits are also an important foundation of carbohydrate and they are rich in fibre and minerals too. The nutrients in fruits improve healing; aid in recovery after exercise; and reduce the risk of cancer, high blood pressure, and constipation.
- You should be eating at least 2 and 1/2 cups of vegetables per day but more is always better when it comes to vegetables.
- Similarly, you should be eating around the same amount of fruit. Fruit is a great source of quick digesting carbohydrates if you ever need a boost of energy.
- Fruits are also an important foundation of carbohydrate and they are rich in fibre and minerals too. The nutrients in fruits improve healing; aid in recovery after exercise; and reduce the risk of cancer, high blood pressure, and constipation.

### **Serving Sizes:**

Knowing how to eyeball serving sizes is a really great skill to be able to do and can help you ensure you get enough of everything you need at each meal. A good way to think about it can be to know that when you are training hard half your plate can be carbs, a quarter veggies and a quarter protein. When you are training less hard you can reduce to a quarter carbs and half veggies instead. These are some graphics I find useful when I want to know that I am having exactly one or two servings of carbs. Obviously, some are easier than others to tell, ie, two pieces of bread.

When you think about food at each meal you can think about it in terms of serving sizes or calories. You want to aim for 300 calories from carbs or 2/3 servings. Remember that calories do not always equate to serving sizes as a muffin is very high in calories but only counts as one serving of grains.

**What Does 100 Calories of Grains Look Like?**

Muffin, French Bread, Pita, Whole Wheat Bread, English Muffin, Tortilla, Bagel, Rice Cakes, Oatmeal, Brown Rice

**SPARKPEOPLE**  
Read article for detailed portion sizes and more.

**Rice and pasta**

1 serving is  
1 cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles or couscous

**Bread**

1 serving is  
2 thin slices wholemeal bread, 1 1/2 slices wholemeal soda or 1 pitta pocket

**Potato**

1 serving is  
2 medium or 4 small potatoes

**Porridge and muesli**

1 serving is  
1/2 cup dry porridge oats or 1/2 cup of unsweetened muesli

**Cereal flakes**

1 serving is  
1 cup flaked type breakfast cereal



**Your serving guide to vegetables, salad and fruit**

Enjoy **5-7** servings a day

**Small fruits**

1 serving is  
2 mandarin oranges, 2 kiwis, 2 plums or similar size fruit

**Medium fruits**

1 serving is  
1 apple, 1 banana, 2 oranges, 1 pear or similar size fruit

**Large fruits**

1 serving is  
1/2 grapefruit, 1 slice of melon, 1 slice of pineapple, 2 slices of mango

**Berries**

1 serving is  
4 strawberries, 10 grapes/cherries or 14 raspberries

**Dried fruit**

1 serving is  
1 heaped dessertspoon of raisins or sultanas, 2 figs, 3 prunes or 1 handful of dried banana chips

**Tinned and cooked fruit**

1 serving is  
1/2 cup of fruit tinned in own juice or stewed fruit

**Juices and smoothies**

1 serving is  
1 glass (200ml) of unsweetened 200% fruit or vegetable juice can count as a portion, but **only one glass counts**, further glasses of juice don't count toward your total 5-7 GDF

**Cooked vegetables**

1 serving is  
1/2 cup of cooked vegetables, fresh, frozen or tinned

**Salad vegetables**

1 serving is  
1 bowl of mixed salad, 1 medium tomato or 5cm piece of cucumber

**Soup**

1 serving is  
1 bowl homemade vegetable soup

**Measure up**

Decanters and disposable plastic cups are handy ways to check serving sizes.

For more healthy eating facts visit [www.safefood.eu](http://www.safefood.eu)

In safe In healthy In well



### What Does 100 Calories of Fruit Look Like?



 **SPARKPEOPLE**  
Read article for detailed portion sizes and more.



### What Does 100 Calories of Veggies Look Like?



 **SPARKPEOPLE**  
Read article for detailed portion sizes and more.

Clearly 100 calories of fruit and vegetables is not equal to one serving size. For example, half a banana is 100 calories but a whole banana is one serving. I do think these graphics can be useful in understanding how to visualise the food and meals that we prepare. Always know that more fruit and veg is a great choice and if you aren't sure what to eat, go with fruit and veg. They are important sources of carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and fibre. You can't go wrong!

**Healthy Choices:**

Finally, here is a list of healthy carbohydrate sources you can use if you are ever unsure of what is the best way to give yourself the energy that you need.

Note: I don't include a list of fruit and vegetables because I think the best thing to do is just eat the ones you enjoy. My biggest tip is to make sure you are including a variety. Try make sure you are eating the entire rainbow everyday and that is the best way to make sure you are getting all the vitamins and minerals that you need.

Red	Strawberries, watermelon, Raspberries	Red peppers, tomatoes
Green	Kiwi, grapes, melon	Peas, beans, squash, cucumber, zucchini, spinach, broccoli
Blue/Purple	Blueberries, grapes, plums, prunes	Eggplant, beets
Orange	Mango, peaches, melon, oranges	Carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin
Yellow	Pineapple, lemon	Corn, peppers, squash
White	Bananas, pears, apples	Garlic, onions, mushrooms

Grain	Starchy Vegetable
Brown Rice	Sweet Potato
Whole Wheat Bread	Potato
Bran Cereal	Pumpkin
Rye Crackers	Butternut
Corn	Squash
Corn products (Cornflakes)	Carrots
Barley	Beetroot
Quinoa	Peas
Oatmeal	Lentils
Popcorn	Beans

## Protein:

### Sources:

Protein, as we know is crucial for athletes. If we aren't getting enough protein our body can begin to break down our muscles to obtain the protein there. Protein can make us stronger, faster and more powerful by helping grow and repair our muscles.

Protein can come from animal sources (meats, seafood, eggs, and poultry) and plant sources (beans, nuts, and legumes) . If one-quarter to one-third of your plate at two of your daily meals is covered with a protein-rich food, you can get the right amount of the amino acids you need to build and repair muscles.

### Dairy:

- Dairy foods such as low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese are not only quick and easy sources of protein but are also rich in vitamin D (if fortified) and calcium, a mineral that is particularly important, not only for growing children and teens but also for women and men of all ages.
- If you prefer to limit your consumption of dairy products because you are lactose intolerant or are biased against dairy, you may have difficulty consuming the recommended intake of calcium from natural foods.
- For example, to absorb the same amount of calcium that you would obtain from one glass of milk, you'd need to consume either 3 cups of broccoli, 8 cups of spinach, 2 1/2 cups of white beans, 6 cups of pinto beans, 6 cups of sesame seeds, or 30 cups of unfortified soy milk (Nancy Clark)

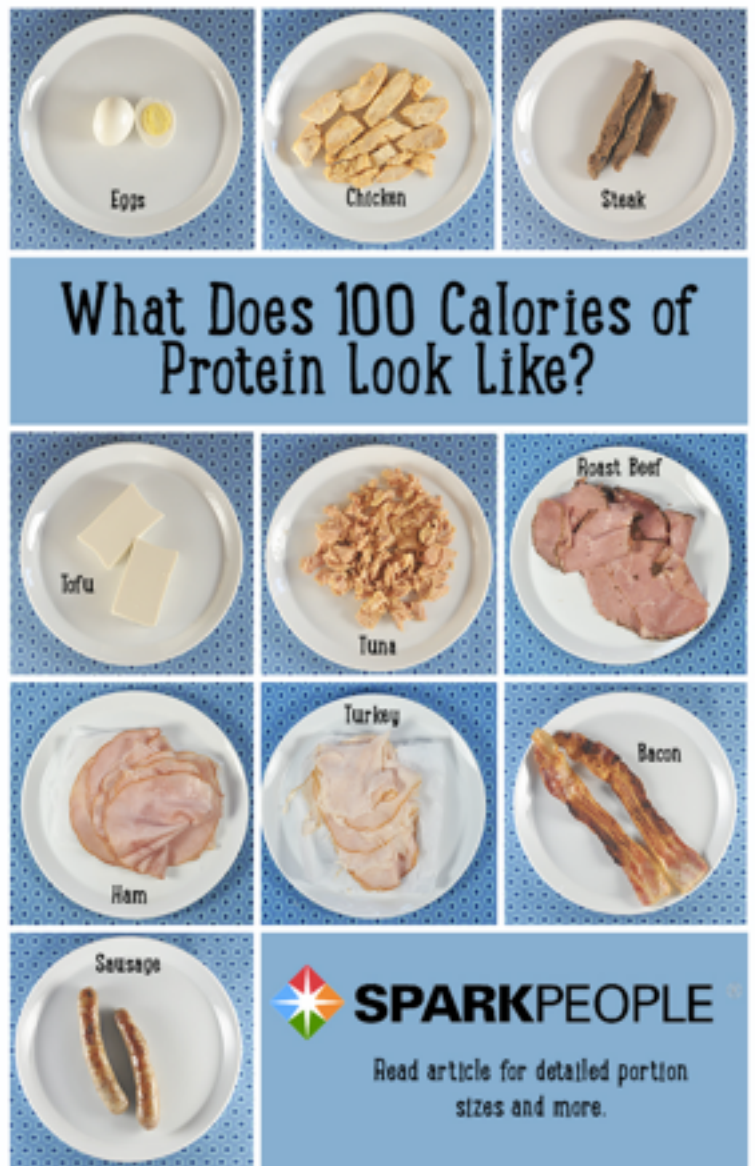
### Animal Products:

- Athletes tend to eat either too much or too little protein, depending on their health consciousness, accuracy of nutrition education, or lifestyle. Some athletes fill up on too much meat and others do not eat enough at all.
- All types of protein-rich foods contain valuable amino acids. **Chicken and turkey.** Poultry generally has less saturated fat than red meats, so it tends to be a more heart-healthy choice.
- **Fish.** Fresh, frozen, or canned fish provides not only a lot of protein but also the omega-3 fat that protects your health.
- **Lean beef.** A lean roast-beef sandwich made with two thick slices of whole-grain bread for carbohydrate is an excellent example. OR even lean beef spaghetti sauce, just make sure you are buying varieties with low fat.

Other:

- **Peanut butter.** Although peanut butter by the jarful can often be very high in calories and fat it is a great addition to your fruit to help making a more balanced meal.
- Beans, legumes, lentils and more are great vegetarian additions to your diet that are high in protein. It can often be a healthy choice for families to have one day a week that they eat meat free to reduce saturated fats consumed and increase variety.
- Often breads, cereals and other grains have high levels of protein that can be a helpful addition to ensure you are getting enough at each meal.

**Serving Sizes:**



Remember that calories do not equal serving size but it can be a helpful tool when visualising how much to include at each meal. Aim for 3oz of protein at each meal if you can.

## Healthy Choices:

Here is a table of healthy protein choices that you can include at each meal.

Animal Product	Protein (g)	Other	Protein (g)
Egg white		3 Nuts (1 oz)	6
Beef (4oz)	30	Lentils (Half cup)	7
Chicken Breast (4oz)	30	Hummus (Half cup)	8
Tuna (6oz)	30	Peanut Butter (2 tbsp)	9
Cheese (2oz)	6	Tofu (4 oz)	11
Milk (1 cup)	7	Soy Milk (1 cup)	7
Yogurt (6oz)	7	Bread (1 slice)	4

As you can see there are many foods you can use to include protein in your diet. These are just a few very healthy sources for reference. It is also important to note that vegetarian sources require you to eat more than one serving for the same amount of protein as what you would find in an animal product. That means that on days you eat more plant based it is important to make sure you are eating enough servings to get adequate protein.

## Fat:

### Sources:

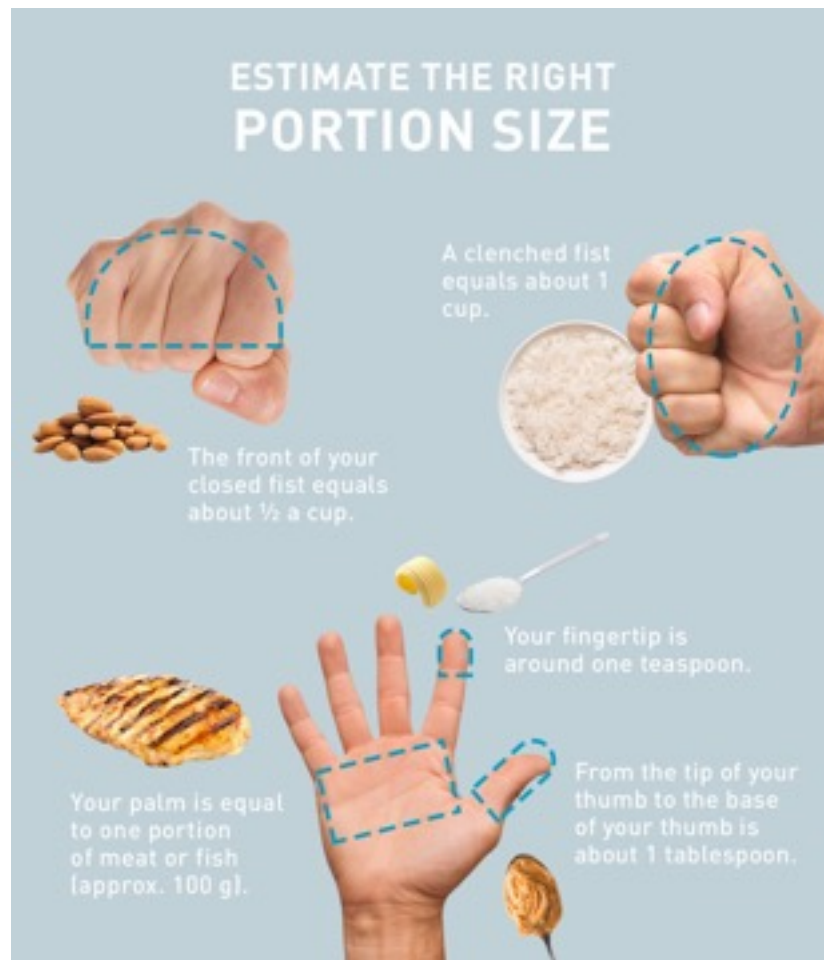
Remember that about 20 to 35 percent of the calories in your diet can come from fat. According to the food pyramid, about 5 teaspoons of fat per day are appropriate for an 1,800-calorie food plan. The problem is that some people eat way too much fat—buttery, cheese-filled eggs for breakfast; burgers and fries for lunch; and fried chicken for dinner. If you struggle with having too much fat in your diet, try choose lower fat foods for two of your three meals to start.

- The following forms of fat are a positive addition to your sports diet because they are health enhancing.
- **Olive oil.** This monounsaturated fat is associated with low risk of heart disease and cancer. Use it for salads, cooking and keeping pasta from sticking together. If you use olive oil for its health-giving properties, buy the unrefined extra-virgin olive oil.
- **Peanut butter (and other nut butters).** All-natural brands are best because they are less processed, but even Skippy, Jif, and other commercial peanut butters offer predominantly health-protective fat. Make sure you watch the serving size on this though, it can be really easy to put a lot more peanut butter on your toast than you expect!



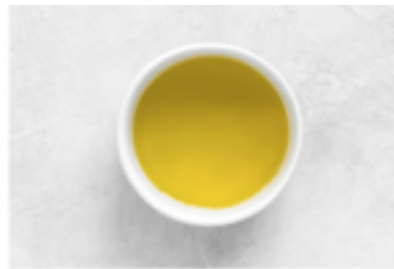
- **Walnuts, almonds, and other nuts.** Great to add to salads, pasta or just to snack on.
- **Flaxseed (ground) and flax oil.** Sprinkle ground flaxseed on cold cereal, blend it into shakes, and add it to pancake batter. This is also a GREAT source of fibre.
- Fat can also be found in eggs, dairy and other animal products that are typically sources of protein. If you follow a vegetarian diet or try and reduce the amount of meat you consume it is likely that you need to add more fat into your diet to supplement this.
- Remember: Fat is high calorie in comparison to protein and carbs. This means that 10g of fat has more calories than 10g of protein and this is why the serving sizes of fat are so small compared to the other macronutrients. Be careful not to overdo it on the serving sizes or portions otherwise you may find yourself in a calorie surplus. This can be great if you want to gain weight, but if you want to stay the same then make sure you are only getting a couple ACCURATE servings a day of oils and fats.

### Serving Sizes:





lard



extra virgin olive oil



tallow

# FATS



coconut oil



butter



avocado oil

These are some visuals that can help you when you are measuring fat to include in each meal. Try and include one serving whenever you have a meal. It will help you stay full for longer.



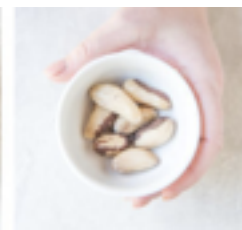
2g net carbs



5g net carbs



1g net carbs

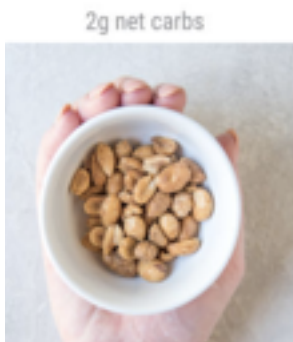


1.5g net carbs



2.5g net carbs

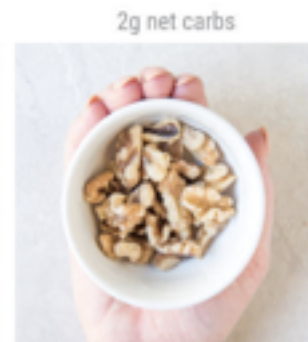
## ONE OUNCE OF NUTS



2g net carbs



0g net carbs



2g net carbs



8g net carbs

### Healthy Choices:

Other than the sources I mentioned above, here is a table you can refer to when you want to know some healthy fat additions you can include in your diet.

Oil	Nuts	Other
Olive	Walnut	Avocados
Coconut	Almond	Dark Chocolate
Avocado	Peanut	Eggs
Walnut	Cashew	Fatty fish (Salmon)

### Eat Better

Below you will find a comparison table of **how you told me that you eat**, with tips and suggestions of how to improve based on all the information above. If you have read everything then you will be able to make swaps yourself but this is just a little example of how you could do it to get you started. Underneath the tables will be some tips and information specialised for you.

Remember: A soccer player's diet should consist of about 60-65% carbohydrate, 20-25% fat and 10-15% protein. This will vary slightly depending on your goals but for the most part this is a healthy range to aim for.

Meal	Your Food	Comments
Breakfast	Bread, Coco pops, yogurt	Whilst it is a myth that you have to have breakfast to be a very healthy person, breakfast can be a great way to set up your nutrition for the rest of the day. If eating bread, I recommend a whole grain variety for slow release carbohydrates to keep you fuelled throughout the day. Coco pops are more of a "every once in a while" cereal because they are quite high in sugar so you could mix them half and half with a healthier cereal if you are reluctant to let them go. Or enjoy them every other day. Yogurt is a good way to add protein to your breakfast and is full of healthy probiotics, protein and fat - especially if you choose greek yogurt!
Lunch	Toasted cheese/Sandwich/ Bacon	Use the information in the document to ensure all your meals have a little bit of fat, protein and carbs. If you have a higher carb breakfast, try add some extra protein at lunch to make sure you are getting enough protein - this is important for muscle growth and helping your muscles heal themselves after strenuous training! A toasted cheese on whole wheat is an okay choice, but would be even better if you added some tuna and turned it into a tunamelt (extra protein) and added a salad on the side for vitamins and minerals.
Dinner	Meat/Rice/Potatoes	Ensure you are having a variety of vegetables throughout the week if possible. If you eat red meat try stick to one serving size. Overall a rice/pasta base meal is great for athletes and growing children. A big tip would be try and include whole grain varieties like brown rice/whole wheat pasta every now and again. Potatoes are also fantastic as a source of starch, vitamins and fibre.
Snacks	Sugar in Tea, Future life milkshake or porridge before training	Having a high protein, high carb snack like the future life shake or cereal before training is a great choice and will give you energy for your muscles to burn! Sugar in tea is okay, as long as you are not eating too much dessert or sugary things throughout the rest of the day.

**Meal Ideas:**

Meal	Suggestion 1	Suggestion 2
Breakfast	Eggs, Toast and Fruit	Fruit, Oatmeal with honey and Yogurt
Lunch	Tuna or grilled chicken sandwich and a side salad.	Pasta/Rice with veggies and chicken. Fruit for dessert. Glass of milk for extra protein
Dinner	Rice, Veggies and a protein source. Vegetable salad	Grilled vegetables, baked potato, meat sauce. Pasta.
Snacks	Banana, Healthy homemade muffins, nuts and raisins, Yogurt and Fruit	Home made baked goods with reduced sugar and fat, home baked potato wedges, berries and a small serving of cream.

**Quick Tips:**

- Eat a variety of wholesome foods to consume a bigger variety of health-protective nutrients. Choose more of the best foods and less of the rest.
- Fuel your body on a regular schedule, eating every two to four hours rather than having one or two big meals per day. Try not to skip meals either. This keeps your blood sugar and your energy constant and prevents overeating at dinner.
- Eat when you are hungry, and then stop when you are content. When eating at restaurants, be cautious of meals that emphasise large portions. They lead to overeating and poor health.
- Take mealtimes seriously. They are there to fuel your performance and make you a stronger, fitter, better athlete
- Small changes at a time that you can stick to are better than changing everything at once and then giving up.
- Following a demanding training program increases the body's need for energy. Extra meals or nutritious snacks and drinks should be eaten to provide enough fuel during strenuous conditioning periods.
- Carbohydrates should be predominantly in the form of fresh fruits and whole grains such as whole meal bread, pasta, potatoes and brown rice. Protein should come from lean meats, poultry, fish, pulses, beans and nuts.
- Saturated fat intake should be reduced in most cases i.e. full fat milk, cheeses, pastries, cookies, pies, fast food. Fat should not be omitted from the diet. Good fats are found in olive oil, avocados, nuts and seeds and oily fish such as mackerel.

- Drink at least 2.5 litres of water everyday!

### **Personal Suggestions:**

- Overall, based on what you described to me, you are eating pretty balanced. There is always room for extra fruit and vegetables!
- Portion sizes are also really important when eating balanced. If you find yourself loading up many plates at every meal you might be getting too much of what you need. Try filling up on vegetables first and then sticking to the plate portion sizes mentioned earlier. This is key especially if your family eats a lot of red meat.
- Make sure you read the document carefully and look for places where you could improve to make sure you are getting enough protein, carbs and fat. All 3 are very important for athletes.
- I like to follow the 80/20 way of eating. This means that 80% of the time you eat as healthy as you can making choices that focus around lean meats, vegetables and complex carbs. The other 20% of the time you eat more relaxed. What this means is if you eat 4 meals a day (3 meals and 1 snack) you have 28 meals in a week, and 20% of that is 5.6. Therefore, for 5 or 6 meals a week you can eat pretty relaxed and this makes it very easy to stick to a healthy eating plan. However, you want to enjoy the healthy eating part and not "suffer" for 80% of your meals a week, so make sure you enjoy the healthy choices you make and enjoy the 80% just as much as the 20%. Life is too short to not enjoy everything you do - including training and eating!
- Overall I think you could have a great diet that fits in to everything you need as a young, growing soccer player. So just use this document as you see fit. Make sure you are eating as many different types of fruit and vegetables as you can to get all the vitamins and minerals your body needs.
- I recommend eating three meals throughout the day instead of two when things go back to a regular schedule. Over summer or during quarantine it's not so bad because we are often less active and sleeping more!
- My main goal here is for you to understand the different types of food and how they affect your body so that as you get older you can make smart choices for yourself.
- **WATER: Make sure you are drinking enough water throughout the day - this will help prevent you from getting cramps and muscle pains.** It is not enough to just drink before and after a workout - if you have waited until you are thirsty it is too late! Try making a goal to drink 2 litres of water a day and even 3 litres of water when it is hot or you are training.
- As a supplement to gatorade: coconut water is a great choice filled with healthy minerals like potassium that will help replace lost salts after a sweaty workout.

- High potassium foods to include to help with your muscle spasms: Banana, spinach, sweet potato, avocados, watermelon, butternut squash.

### Real World Examples:

I have decided to include some information about professional soccer players so you can see a couple things:

1. They all value their nutrition.
2. They all demonstrate there is a relationship between good nutrition and sporting success.
3. There is variety in what is considered "good nutrition". They do not all eat the exact same cookie cutter meal plan but they follow similar guidelines to ensure they are getting enough protein, carbohydrates and fat.

Soccer is an extremely physically demanding sport. In soccer, the longest distance covered by any position is about 12-13km, which is the average amount covered by a midfielder during a match. Following midfielders are defenders, who run an average of 10km per match, and forwards who average 9km. This is an extreme amount of running and it is not just constant jogging it is a mixture of sprinting, walking, running and using body strength too when you are battling for the ball.

#### Lionel Messi: ([goal.com](http://goal.com))

Lionel Messi actually had a really bad diet full of fried foods and soda. In 2014 he worked with a nutritionist to improve his diet so that he could be 100% in every game that he played. These were his key principles:

- Swap sugar loaded foods with salad and seeds, fresh fruit and nuts
- Reduce red meat intake
- Stick to fresh produce
- Whole grains are essential
- The five key foods in his diet are: water, olive oil, whole grains, fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy protein sources.



Following his diet changes he suffered less injuries and spent less time on the sidelines. He started to understand that if he wanted longevity as a player, he had to eat to sustain his body. He wasn't 18 anymore.



### **Cristiano Ronaldo: ([goal.com](http://goal.com))**

Cristiano Ronaldo has six separate meals a day, based around a diet of protein and carbohydrates, principally pasta and chicken - always cooked without oil or salt.

The only drink the Portuguese athlete allows himself is water, except for a fruit juice at breakfast, normally pineapple or orange juice.

-Eating 6 smaller meals a day is a great way to make sure your body is fuelled throughout the day and always has carbs and protein ready to use.

- He particularly likes fish - particularly swordfish, sea bass and sea bream - and his favourite dish is bacalhau a braz, which is a mixture of cod, onions, thinly sliced potatoes and scrambled eggs. He also eats plenty of fruits and lean proteins.
- At restaurants, Ronaldo says he often orders steak and a salad, and never anything frozen - everything he eats is fresh.
- Ronaldo, takes his diet very seriously. "A good workout must be combined with a good diet," he says. "I eat a high protein diet, with lots of wholegrain carbs, fruit and vegetables, and avoid sugary foods."
- An example meal plan is: low fat yogurt and fruit for breakfast, chicken and salad for lunch 1, tuna/egg/tomato for lunch 2, fruit and avocado toast as snacks, swordfish and salad for dinner 1 and steak and calamari for dinner 2.
- As you can see he chooses to get most of his carbs from fruit and vegetables as opposed to grains.



**Conclusion:**

Hopefully you now understand the importance of having a healthy, balanced diet and how it can help you as an athlete but as a growing teenager. Remember that small changes that you stick to are always better than being too ambitious and constantly relapsing to your old diet. Maybe you already eat the way that is described here and that's great - focus on adding as much variety to your day to day foods as possible. Please let me know if you have any questions! Good luck with your new healthy lifestyle! Once you see improvements in energy, mood, strength, muscle definition and more - you won't regret it. Remember to get your family on board too!