

Cheerleading

There is so much focus on the appearance of cheerleaders, they sometimes become victims of fad diets, fast weight loss and improper nutrition. Cheerleading is a high energy sport that takes fast thinking, good coordination and strong muscles. It is far better to maintain a healthy and nutritious diet, get plenty of rest, drink lots of fluids and exercise to keep your body in peak condition for optimal performance.

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy. Proteins are the basis for building your muscles and fats/oils help with your nerves and hormones, among other things. A proper diet should include all of these.

Before the game

- Eat high carbohydrate foods like bread, pasta, whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. Carbohydrates are digested quickly and provide glucose to the muscles. Stay away from dairy products and too much protein like greasy hamburgers, pizza, ice cream, and cheese. Avoid soda pop and candy bars. They can give you a quick burst of energy, but it will drop quickly, leaving you feeling spent.
- Timing your meal from 1 to 4 hours before strenuous activity will help keep plenty of blood glucose available for your muscles.
- It is also important to drink plenty of water to keep your muscles hydrated.

During the game

- Drink plenty of water. Exertion and perspiration deplete your body of fluids and can lead to dehydration. It is recommended you drink at least a half of cup of water for every twenty minutes of exercise or strenuous activity.
- If your activity is hard and continuous (over 90 minutes), drink a sports beverage or a drink with sugar added.

After the game

- This is the time to eat protein to replenish what you lost during your physical activity, but don't overdo it. Remember protein can not only come from meats but is also present in dairy products and eggs.
- Replace carbohydrates if your activity was long and exerting.
- Replace any potassium or sodium that has been lost during competition or training by eating fruits, vegetables and salty foods.
- Continue to replace fluids.



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Cheerleading

*Healthy eating tips
to maximize your
performance*



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Diet for athletic Performance

The training period offers you an excellent opportunity to establish sound eating practices that will benefit you on the playing field as well throughout life.

Make Snacks Count

Choose snacks that contain more than just calories. When you eat out with friends, choose something nutritionally sound, like a cheeseburger with a slice of tomato and lettuce leaf. How many food groups are present in this sandwich? What might you eat along with this sandwich to make an even better snack?

Look for Extra Food Energy

Teenage athletes burn up more calories than non-athletic teens. You can fill this requirement by eating more food from all food groups. Carbohydrates are the most efficient fuel for your body during strenuous exercise. Get most of your extra energy from foods like starchy vegetables and whole grain or enriched bread cereal, rice, or pasta instead of from fatty foods. For example, on an athlete's plate, a baked potato should get the nod over fries.

Eat Regularly

Breakfast is especially important because you need food to start the day. Your body begins the day in a low-energy, fasted condition. Teens, who eat breakfast score higher on physical fitness tests. Breakfast can be made up of any combination of nutritious foods that you enjoy eating. Spaghetti and meatballs, together with an orange juice and a glass of milk, is a nutritionally sound meal for any time of the day-even breakfast!

Check Your Diet Frequently

Spot-check your daily diet at least once a week. Are you eating at least the minimum number of servings from each food group each day? How can you use the food guide pyramid as a tool to make improvements?

How can you tell if your diet is stacking up? Nutritionists have developed a food-guide system in the shape of a pyramid that can help you rate or evaluate your diet. This guide divides food into five groups on the basis of the nutrients each group provides. By eating the recommended amounts of food from each group daily, you can greatly increase your ability to get all the nutrients your body needs--and that will improve your ability on the playing field.

Athletes come in different sizes and shapes, and follow different types of training programs. While they may all follow these nutritional rules, their meals may look quite different. Athletes who train strenuously for many hours each day will need to eat large amounts of carbohydrate and calories. Big tall athletes will need to eat more than petite athletes, such as gymnasts. Many athletes need to organize their meals to fit around their training or competition schedules.

Keep yourself in shape with a body fat level that suits your sport--eat the right amount of calories for your body size and training program.

Keep your muscles fueled for training and competition by eating plenty of carbohydrate foods. Make room for these foods by reducing the amount of fat.

Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods to provide yourself with all the protein, vitamins, and minerals that your body needs. Your need for some of these nutrients will increase because of your heavy exercise program.

Look after fluid needs. Drink before, during, and after exercise sessions to prevent yourself from becoming dehydrated.

For more information go to:
<http://usm.maine.edu/athletics/>