

## NUTRITION INFORMATION FROM YOUR DIETITIAN

# Sport Nutrition: Weight gain for athletes

When athletes want to gain weight, they're often trying to gain muscle mass. To gain weight, you have to eat more calories than you burn. This can be a challenge for athletes who burn a lot of energy throughout the day. Some athletes may need to eat as many as 5,000-6,000 calories per day to meet their goals. The right training plan and nutrition strategies can help maximize muscle gain in a healthy and safe way. Follow these guidelines:

- **Set realistic goals.** Weight gain is a slow process – aim for 0.5 lbs. (half a pound) to 2.0 lbs. per week.
- **Choose foods high in calories** such as:
  - Nuts, nut butters, and trail mix.
  - Dried fruit.
  - Chocolate milk, especially after practice or competition.
- **Eat regularly and consistently during the day.**
  - Eat every 2-3 hours. Eating frequently keeps energy levels up and helps keep you from getting too hungry.
  - Eat regular snacks between regular meals. For example: Breakfast. Snack. Lunch. Snack. Dinner. Snack.
  - Plan out meals and snacks ahead of time. Missing a meal or snack can set your goal back.
- **Drink calories.**
  - Switch from drinking water or 0 calorie drinks to milk, 100% juice, or smoothies.
  - Replace snack foods with calorie-dense drinks when you're not feeling hungry. Eating every 2-3 hours may mean eating even when you don't feel hungry. Use drinks to avoid feeling overly full.
- **Eat larger meals.**
  - Focus on complex carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, potatoes, cereals, breads, legumes, and beans.
  - Choose lean protein from lean meat, fish, low fat dairy, eggs, and soy.
  - Add healthy fat (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats) for flavor and texture. Healthy fats are found in fish, nuts, seeds, vegetable oils, and avocados.
- **Transform meals and snacks into high calorie options:**
  - Instead of making oatmeal with water, prepare it with milk and add dried fruit, honey, and nuts.
  - Power-pack smoothies with fruit, milk, peanut butter, flax seeds, or Greek yogurt.
  - Stack a sandwich with deli meat, hummus, veggies, and avocado.
- **Choose sugars and fats wisely.**
  - Eat sugars and fats from nutrient-rich sources.
  - Make healthy substitutions.
    - Instead of soda, choose sport drinks (during training), 100% juice, and chocolate milk.
    - Instead of cake, cookies, and processed snacks, choose nutrient-rich yogurts and muffins.
    - Instead of fried and processed snacks, choose nuts, nut butters, vegetable oils, and fish.
- **Fuel your exercise and recovery.**
  - Always eat before and after training. This will help increase your lean muscle mass.
  - Choose whole foods or sport foods based on convenience and availability.
  - Eat a snack with carbohydrates and 10-20 grams of protein immediately after exercise, and then eat a meal 2 hours later. Recovery, especially after strength training or weight lifting, is the best time to maximize protein building and weight gain.

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