



TANTALIZING TIDBITS FOR TEENS

FOOD FOR FITNESS--A WINNING COMBINATION



Good nutrition and physical conditioning work together to help you deliver your best performance! All nutrients (protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins and water) work together as a team to keep you fit. It is a disadvantage to your body when even one nutrient is missing. So don't give yourself an unnecessary handicap--EAT RIGHT!

TEAM UP GOOD NUTRITION WITH PHYSICAL FITNESS!

History tells us that athletes have always looked for ways to perform better. Early athletes believed that eating raw meat would make them courageous and strong and eating dates would make them run faster. Sometimes you hear such diets suggested even today though there is no evidence that they are effective. For example, a high protein diet cannot take the place of a well-balanced diet and regular exercise in building strong muscles. Special foods for athletes like liquid diets and concentrated energy packs may do more harm than good by causing an upset stomach if eaten when a person is excited or tense. If you have not been eating right for good health don't waste any more time. Start now!

Q. What are the best foods for strength and endurance?

A. There are no "miracle foods" and no "magic diets." There is no one food that has all nutrients you need! But, there is a "SPECIAL FORMULA" for teenagers called 4-4-4-2. This means eating each day at least:

- * 4--servings of fruits and vegetables
- * 4--servings of enriched or whole grain cereals
- * 4--servings of milk or foods made from milk such as yogurt, ice cream, etc.
- * 2--servings of meat, egg or other protein rich foods such as beans and cheese

** Some teenage athletes need to eat more than the number of servings listed above because they are so active. Your weight gain or loss will tell you if you are eating the right amount.*

Q. What is the best weight for good performance?

A. Stand in front of a mirror and answer these questions:

- ✓ Are your muscles firm and strong enough to do what you want them to do?
- ✓ Is excessive body fat gone?
- ✓ Do you feel good and look good?

If you can say "yes" to all these, you are probably close to the right weight for good performance. You can always compare yourself to standard height and weight charts too, but use the personal evaluation test to adjust to your own build.

** Remember most teenagers are still growing so you must expect your weight to increase gradually until you reach physical maturity.*



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Q. *What if I weigh too much?*

- A. If your personal evaluation tells you that you weigh too much, do not try to lose more than two pounds per week. Plan ahead far enough so that you are not on a weight loss diet at the time of the competition. Some persons try starvation or drastically limiting liquid intake but this will cause early exhaustion, headache, lack of endurance and lack of alertness too, none of which encourages a peak performance.

To lose weight:

- ✓ Cut down on the total amount of food you eat.
- ✓ Cut out high fat foods like french fries, fatty meats, cookies, pies, gravy, etc.
- ✓ Cut out candy, pop and other "junk" foods.

Q. *What is the best pre-game meal?*

- A. The best pre-game meal is one that helps you feel good so you can perform at your peak. When you are excited or exerting yourself, too little food can make you shaky, and too much food can give you stomach cramps.

- ✓ Choose familiar foods you enjoy.
- ✓ Eat a light meal about three hours before game time.
- ✓ Avoid foods high in fat like steak, french fries, pies, cookies, because these take longer to digest.
- ✓ Drink two to three cups of liquid, such as fruit juice, milk, water.

* *Experiment with kinds and amounts of familiar food that you like to find what makes you most comfortable.*

Q. *How about drinking water before and during a game?*

- A. Loss of body water from heavy perspiration during physical exertion can put extra strain on an athlete's heart and lead to:

- * Early fatigue
- * Lowered efficiency and lack of coordination
- * Increased accidents and injuries

Play it right and do it right!

- ✓ Drink small amounts of water or juices during a game to replace that lost in perspiration.
- ✓ After a game, don't depend on thirst alone to tell you how much to drink. Drink extra liquids to build back your body water content. Athletes who lose more than three to five pounds during an event may require a day or longer before body fluids are replaced to the level required for top performance.

Activity 1: In groups of 2 or 3, list the kinds of foods you usually eat before a game. Note which ones are eaten because you think they have "magical" qualities and which ones are eaten because they make you feel good. Although the pre-game meal contributes significant nutrients to the total daily diet, it is not necessary to have a food from every food group in this one meal.

Activity 2: Keep a record of all the food you eat in a day and then rate it against the Four Food Group Formula. Are you eating 4-4-4-2?

Activity 3: Find someone in your groups who wants to gain weight. Help them plan for this by listing foods or additional servings from each of the four food groups that should be added to their diet.

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