

# Sports Nutrition: Term Definition Essay

## Introduction

Proper nutrition is very important when it comes to athletes because of the amount of exercise and energy consumption is very high and hence the athlete needs some nutrition to keep him going. If the athlete does not obtain proper nutrition, the performance of the athlete will not only decrease but it will also affect his health in everyday life. A sensible athlete knows all this and understands that exercise has to be paired with proper nutrition if one wants to stay healthy and perform well.

All the energy that we need for life and for exercise comes only from the food we eat and fluids we drink (Quinn, E., 2007). Food and drinks have different nutrients that are necessary for our body to function properly. For example, proteins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats are all necessary for daily functioning of the body and all this is obtained from food only. Therefore this shows how important proper nutrition is.

This paper will talk about how proper nutrition improves performance. It will give a few recommendations regarding what should be consumed by athletes before a game and what should they have in daily life. Towards the end, it will outline a few more ways how an athlete can remain healthy.

## Five Ways How Proper Nutrition Improves Performance

Proper nutrition is very important to boost the performance of athletes, in this case, a hockey team. Proper nutrition means that the athlete is consuming the necessary nutrients that its body demands for everyday functioning. This is very important in order for the body. Therefore proper nutrition results in good health and hence this results in good performance. The following are the ways how good nutrition improves performance.

First of all, proper nutrition acts like fuel for exercise. Just like fuel is the running power in a car, proper nutrition is important when it comes to human beings. Carbohydrates are the best source of fuel for exercise. Food products with carbs get broken down to sugar or glucose which is stored in the body and when a person exercises, these provide the energy that is required. This shows the importance of having proper nutrition in order to maintain good performance.

Proper nutrition also helps store energy and helps enhance speed and improve stamina of the athletes. This is important for a sport like hockey which requires a lot of exercise because it is all about speed and stamina. When an athlete has proper nutrition, he does not run out of breath and can run and move at faster speeds allowing him an edge over the other team/player.

After exercise, proper nutrition helps in rebuild muscles which makes the athletes ready for future exercises. If this is not done, it will be impossible for the athlete to perform again. His muscles will not function if proper nutrition is not consumed. Proteins play the role of rebuilding

of muscles. Therefore, one should try and include a lot of protein rich food products in the meal after exercise or a game.

Another way proper nutrition helps improve performance is by keeping the player hydrated. Drinking the right amount of fluids help the athlete remain fresh and hydrated. This is very important in order to maintain body weight and in order to maintain health in the long run. Fluids are very important in order to survive therefore one can only imagine how important it is for good performance.

Lastly, proper nutrition helps the players remain focused on the game. Mind focus is very important for any game because the athletes are required to respond quickly and concentrate on the game. When an athlete has proper nutrition, the player can focus on the game only and hence his performance will increase.

### **Recommendations for Pre-Game Nutrition**

Before a game, it is very important that the athletes have had a good doze of carbohydrates. The reason behind this is because carbohydrates are the best and the most important source of energy for any athlete and these provide the fuel for exercise. It is easily broken down into energy and a large amount can also be stored. Fat on the other hand is digested slowly so it is not a good idea to consume that right before a game such as hockey where the degree of exercise is intense (Quinn, E., 2008).

A solid meal should be consumed at least 4 hours before a game, a snack or a carbohydrate drink should be consumed 2 to 3 hours before game and a sports drink should be consumer 1 hour before exercise. Heavy food products like any kind of meat, junk food like candy bars, fries etc should be avoided before a game. The body is not capable of digesting these food products easily and hence they stay in the stomach for a long time. As a result, these may cause stomach ache or cramps (Quinn, E., 2008).

### **Ways to Improve Nutrition and Performance**

One way to improve nutrition and performance is knowing the importance of the different source of proper nutrition. Then only, we can maintain a healthy diet in everyday life. This section will attempt to do this.

The nutrients that we consume can be divided into three main categories. These include Proteins, Carbohydrates and Fats. All three are very important in order to have a proper diet. However, the amount or ratio of each which should be optimally consumed is still debatable (Quinn, E., 2007). Some say one should be consumed more than the others while someone else says something else. We will discuss all three one by one and understand the importance of each.

Proteins are also known as building blocks of the body. This name is given to it for obvious reasons. Proteins are mainly responsible for making muscles, bones, tendons, skin, hair and other tissues. Proteins also have other functions like to transport nutrients throughout the body and

production on enzymes. One reason why it is important to have an adequate amount of protein in one's diet is because proteins are not easily stored by the body. Eggs, fish, chicken and other meat and dairy products are completely protein sources while vegetables, fruits and nuts are incomplete sources of proteins. For an athlete, proteins ideally play the role of repairing and rebuilding muscle which is broken down while exercising. Therefore, it is important to have protein after exercise. Some people try using proteins as fuel for exercise which means they consume protein before exercise. This is not a good idea because proteins will not be able to rebuild or repair muscles in this case. Since athletes have more muscle activity, they need more protein intake compared to an average adult. In general, an average adult requires 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day while an athlete requires 1.2 to 1.8 grams per kilogram (Quinn, E., 2007).

Athletes often believe that fat is not good for them. However, they need to understand that excessive fat is not good for them. Fat plays a very important role in an athlete's body. Considering this, we can understand the importance of dietary fat intake for an athlete. Fat is a great fuel for exercise that is slow and of low intensity. For example, cycling and walking. The reason behind this is that it is slow to digest. Athletes need to be careful about the amount of fat they include in their diet. It is not suggested to have fat immediately before or during intense exercise. The hockey team must be aware of this (Quinn, E., 2007).

Next we have carbohydrates. These are the most important source of energy for athletes. Carbohydrates are responsible for the energy that is provided when one's muscles contract while exercising. Once carbohydrates are consumed, they are broken down into smaller sugar or glucose in the body which act as energy that fuels exercise. Since these are so important, athletes must have maximum carbohydrate intake before a game and fill their glycogen stores. They must reload during the game and must refill afterwards so that they are ready for their next activity (Quinn, E., 2007).

## **References**

Body Recomposition, "Protein Requirements for Strength and Power Athletes." 2008. Body Recomposition. Web.