

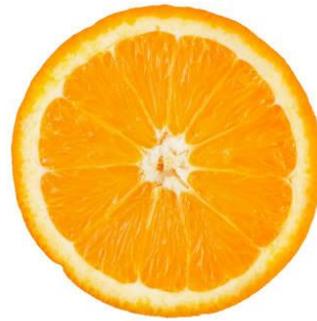
# Prep School Performance Nutrition News

with

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## *Nutritionist. Speaker. Consultant.*

Greetings! I hope the school year is off to a good start for you all. By now, unfortunately, some of your student athletes may be dealing with injuries. Did you know that their rehab and recovery can be helped by attention to the foods they choose? Read on for info about which foods are tops for getting back in the game quickly!

- Kathleen Searles, MS, RDN, LDN

## Nutrition for the Injured Athlete

Injuries can interrupt training and competition for even the most experienced athletes. When injuries occur, attention to sports nutrition can help get students back in action sooner.

Three key nutrients for healing are calories, protein, and water.

**Calories:** The challenge for an injured athlete is to promote healing, but avoid unwanted weight gain. Each athlete will want to consider how much his/her injury has changed his/her training volume and how aggressive the planned rehab regimen is. Adequate calories are important to protect muscle mass and promote the healing process. Injured athletes should focus on eating nutrient dense foods

and avoiding highly processed and high sugar foods. Frequent weight checks can help injured athletes adjust intake up or down based on any weight trends.

**Protein:** Good protein intake also helps protect muscle mass.

Proteins such as whey protein are high in branched chain amino acids (leucine, iso-leucine, valine) which are key for building muscle protein. It is a good idea to plan a recovery snack after each rehab session that provides some healthy carbohydrate



and high quality protein. (For example, in one study of people recovering from ACL tears, a protein and carbohydrate snack after exercise improved quadriceps muscle growth.) Examples include cottage cheese and whole wheat crackers, yogurt and fruit, or cereal and milk.

Water is important for normal cell function and delivers nutrients for healing, so the injured athlete should maintain good baseline hydration.

Other nutrients have specific functions that support healing.

Vitamin A is found in orange, yellow, and dark green fruits and vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes, squash and spinach. It plays a role in cell growth and development and immune system function.

Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, melons, and bell peppers and is involved in tissue synthesis.

Zinc is a trace mineral that is essential for the protein synthesis and cell division required in healing. Good sources include nuts, seeds, beef, and seafood. Omega 3 fatty acids are found in fish and seafood and play a role in reducing inflammation.

### Nutrients for Specific Injury Types

In addition to the general nutrition guidelines above, there are some specific nutrients indicated for various types of injuries.

**Fractures:** Quick healing requires adequate calories first and foremost. Important nutrients for bone include calcium and vitamin D, so special attention to these nutrients is indicated for athletes who don't drink milk or fortified milk alternatives. Other food sources of calcium include leafy greens, tofu, and fortified juice or cereals. Bone is a very complex tissue with vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin K, Vitamin A, magnesium, phosphorus, boron and many others, so eating a variety of healthy foods is important.

**Tendon and Ligament Injuries:** These tissues are made of collagen, and foods that support collagen formation may be beneficial to speed recovery. Gelatin is rich in amino acids (proline, hydroxyproline, lysine and hydroxylysine) that promote collagen synthesis along with Vitamin C. Copper and fluorine (found in fluoridated water, tea, and fish) are important minerals for ligaments and tendons. The sports medicine team at Northwestern University recommends the following foods for athletes with torn ligaments or ruptured tendons:

Collagen boosters – poultry, fish, cheese, eggs, cherries, dark berries, and Jell-o

Copper rich foods – dark leafy greens, dried fruits (prunes), cocoa, black pepper

Foods rich in Vitamin C – citrus, berries, kiwi, dark leafy greens

**Surgery:** Immobilization because of surgery (or any type of injury) can lead to rapid loss of muscle mass. Adequate calories and protein can help counteract this loss. Include protein rich foods such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, nuts, seeds and legumes.

To prevent weight gain while less active, athletes should reduce portions of high carbohydrate foods (bread, pasta, potatoes etc.) and eat more fruits and vegetables instead. They should also limit their intake of juices and sugar sweetened beverages and sports drinks.

**Concussion:** Omega 3 fatty acids (DHA and EPA) are important nutrients for cell membranes, which are damaged in a concussion. The best source is fatty fish such as salmon or tuna. Athletes who don't eat fish can

focus on plant foods that contain alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) such as walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds and canola oil. Another potentially helpful nutrient is choline, a B-vitamin that supports cell membranes and neurotransmitter formation. Egg yolks are the best dietary source of choline.

Are your athletes tempted by the plethora of sports supplements that are widely promoted? Call today to book "Food First: Improving Performance with Meal Planning."

In this 60 -90 minute session students will learn the basics of a healthy sports diet and techniques for evaluating supplement claims. Contact Kathleen Searles at 978 6972834 or [ksearles@lunchboxnutritionist.com](mailto:ksearles@lunchboxnutritionist.com)

Kathleen Searles provides consulting services to private secondary schools. She is available to speak to students, faculty, coaches, etc. on a variety of general and sports nutrition topics. With over 30 years of experience in the boarding school environment, she is ready to tailor nutrition messages to your school's needs.

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