Client Name: Date:

RDN/NDTR: Email: Phone:

Fuel for Basketball Players

Basketball demands strength, power, endurance, speed, agility, and coordination. Players make nearly 1,000 movement changes, roughly 1 every 2 seconds, and may cover about 3 miles in a typical game. Practices combine conditioning and training, drills, and simulated games.

Basketball burns many calories, and your needs can differ with your playing position. Your sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help design a nutrition plan that meets the sport's demands and fuels you throughout a long season.

Tips

- Have 5 to 6 nutrient-rich meals each day to support performance and meet body composition goals.
- Eat at least 5 daily servings of fruit and vegetables to supply vitamins and minerals.
- Make carbohydrate the main part of your diet. The amount needed ranges from 3 to 12 grams per kilogram of body weight, depending on your sport, position, daily training load, and overall goals. Your sports RDN can help choose the carbohydrate intake suited to you.
  - Select quality carbohydrate sources, including whole grain cereals and breads, pasta, rice, starchy vegetables, dried or whole fruit, and low-fat yogurt and milk.
  - Limit refined carbohydrates and sweets, such as cookies, pastries, cakes, candy, sugary soft drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened tea, and specialty coffee drinks.
- Protein supplies the materials to build muscle mass and support healthy growth and development. Estimated daily protein needs range from 1.2 to 2.0 grams per kilogram of body weight, depending on training status, training phase, and individual circumstances. Your sports RDN can explain the protein intake that meets your needs.
  - Protein timing matters when building muscle. Within 1 hour after training, eat protein with carbohydrate to supply amino acids, the building blocks of protein, for muscle growth and repair.
  - Try to have protein about every 3 hours in the day, including 1 hour before bed.
  - Protein above the recommended amount will neither speed muscle growth nor increase muscle mass.
- Include healthy fats to provide enough energy for training and help your body absorb vitamins. Fat should supply 20% to 35% of total calories. As training volume rises, your need for dietary fat also grows. Very high or very low fat intakes offer no performance advantage. Your sports RDN can help you determine the fat intake that meets your needs.
  - Healthy choices include olive oil, olives, nuts and nut butters, avocado, and plant oils, including canola oil.

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Carbohydrate and Protein Portions

Using serving sizes for carbohydrate and protein foods can make it easier to choose enough fuel before, during, and after training, and at meals and snacks. Your sports RDN can guide food portions and eating times to support your best sport performance.

Carbohydrate sources	Portion (1 serving = 15 grams carbohydrate)
Bread	1 slice
Tortilla	1, 6 inches
Corn	½ cup
Mashed potatoes	½ cup
Baked or sweet potato	½, medium
Rice	1/3 cup
Popcorn	3 cups
Apple	1, small
Grapes	15
Tangerine	2
Raisins	2 tablespoons
Orange juice	½ cup
Milk or yogurt	1¼ cups

Protein sources	Portion (1 serving = 7 grams protein)
Cheese	1 ounce
2% milk	1 cup
Plain yogurt	1 cup
Cottage cheese	¼ cup
Egg	1 whole
Beef, pork, chicken, turkey, or fish	1 ounce
Tofu	¼ cup
Nuts, seeds	2 tablespoons
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons
Black beans or kidney beans	½ cup, cooked

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Fuel for Basketball Players (2022)

Hydration

The repeated starts and stops of basketball games and practices cause water and electrolyte losses as sweat cools your body. Water suits most athletes best. Keep a full water bottle within reach.

Hydration Tips

- Before practice or a game: Aim for about 2 cups (16 ounces) of water 2 to 3 hours before starting. Drinking sodium-containing fluids and/or eating salty snacks promotes thirst and helps retain fluid.
- Before taking the floor: Have 1 cup (8 ounces) of water 10 to 20 minutes beforehand, as tolerated.
- During competition: Drink enough to keep total fluid losses below 2% of body weight. Weighing before and after practice shows the percentage of body weight lost and helps assess whether you drink enough for training and competition. Remember that weight lost in a training session is water, not muscle or fat tissue.
  - Your sports RDN will set personal hydration goals based on sweat rate, training status, temperature, humidity, and the intensity and length of play.
- In hot, humid conditions: Prevent excessive dehydration with drinks containing electrolytes, including sports drinks.

For lengthy practices, games, or events, sports drinks are a useful option. They supply carbohydrate, sodium, and potassium in a balance that helps replace losses. Use the same drinking schedule as for water and pay attention to your body. Drink when thirsty, and watch urine frequency and color. Frequent urination throughout the day with light-straw-colored urine usually indicates adequate fluid intake.

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Meals Before, During, and After Training or Competition

These examples show how to time fuel around training or competition. Try the suggestions in training first to check that your stomach tolerates the schedule before competition day. Your sports RDN can tailor food choices and amounts to your needs.

When to Fuel	Suggested Fuel
	Fuel for Training and Competition
3-4 hours before an event **3-4 hours between events**	A meal 3-4 hours before training or competition, or between events, gives you time to digest. Choose plenty of carbohydrate, little fat, and moderate protein. ■ 6-inch turkey sub, 1 ounce tortilla chips, 1 piece of fruit, and 1 cup 2% milk OR ■ 1 grilled shrimp wrap in a flour tortilla, 1 ounce pretzels, 1 cup berries, and 1 cup soy milk
1-2 hours before an event **1-2 hours between events**	Choose a snack high in carbohydrate, low in fat, and moderate in protein 1-2 hours before training or competition, especially if you could not eat earlier. Between events, snack as tolerated to restore muscle fuel and prepare for the next event. Larger snacks are generally easier to tolerate when you have 2 hours. ■ 1 bagel with 1 tablespoon peanut butter OR ■ 1 granola bar providing 30-40 grams carbohydrate and 8-10 grams protein OR ■ 5-10 crackers plus 1 ounce cheese OR ■ 1 cup cereal, 1 cup 2% milk or soy milk, and 1 banana OR ■ ¾ cup yogurt plus ½ cup fruit OR ■ 12-16 ounces fruit smoothie containing no more than 8 grams protein OR ■ 8-12 ounces 2% chocolate milk plus 1 banana OR ■ 2 hard-boiled eggs and a low-protein/high-carbohydrate granola bar
Under 1 hour before an event or with 1 hour between events	Choose carbohydrate foods or drinks that digest quickly and easily. ■ Sports drinks (drink as tolerated; no set amount is suggested) OR ■ 1 piece of fruit such as a banana or orange
	During Training or Competition
Events lasting over 1 hour	During training or competition, have a snack with 30 to 60 grams carbohydrate each hour. ■ Sports drinks or sports foods, such as gel packets, gum packets, energy chews, or sport beans OR ■ 1 piece of fruit OR ■ 1 cup pretzels
After Training or Competition	
30 minutes after event if competing again the next day **Include recovery foods at your next meal if tomorrow is a rest day.**	Have a snack rich in carbohydrate and protein. Protein supports muscle repair; carbohydrate replenishes glycogen, the carbohydrate stored in muscle, used during training or competition. Aim for about 15 to 30 grams protein and 1.0 to 1.2 grams carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight. Your sports RDN can help select the right amounts. ■ 6-inch turkey sub OR ■ 1 grilled chicken sandwich OR ■ 12-16 ounces 2% chocolate milk or soy milk OR ■ 1 cup cottage cheese plus 1 piece of fruit OR ■ 10-15 crackers with 1-2 ounces cheese

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FAQs

I feel more tired and have less energy late in the season. Could my eating habits contribute?

Basketball seasons are lengthy and demanding. Enough carbohydrate, protein, and healthy fat may help prevent fatigue as the season progresses. Eat before and after each workout, and carry snacks so fuel for exercise or recovery is always available.

Use this handout's fueling table for meal and snack timing ideas.

My uniform is soaked after play, with white rings on the shirt and shorts once dry. Should I adjust my hydration?

Heavy, salty sweating requires replacement of both fluid and sodium. Sports drinks provide both, and endurance formulas contain more sodium than standard versions. Adding an electrolyte packet to your sports drink also increases sodium intake. Other options are salty foods, including soup, pretzels, baked chips, pickles, olives, salted nuts, and tomato juice.

Notes

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