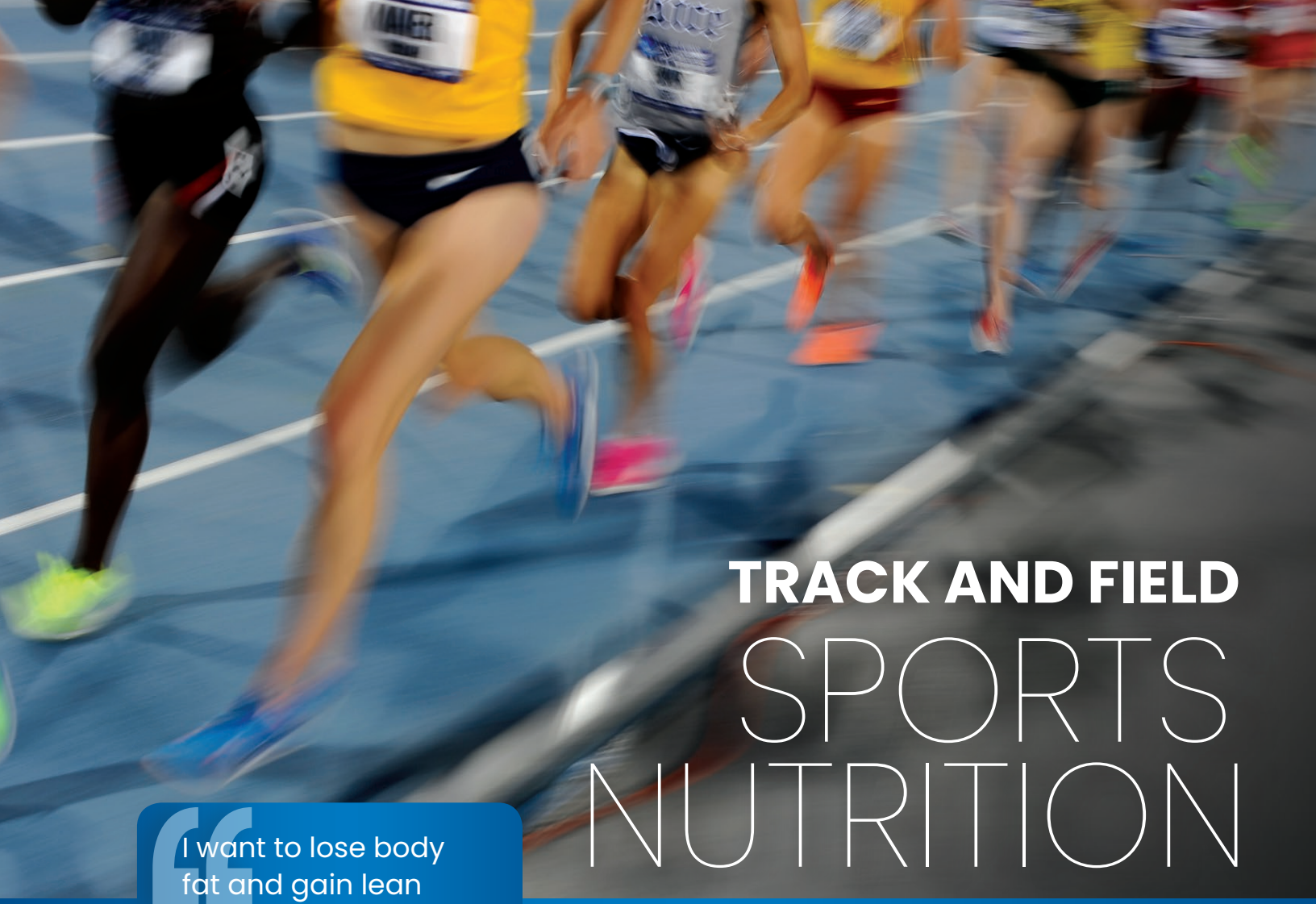


TRACK AND FIELD SPORTS NUTRITION

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> I want to lose body fat and gain lean muscle, so I skip breakfast, eat fruit for lunch and have a big dinner. Yet I struggle to finish preseason workouts and am not reaching my body-composition goals. How should I eat during this demanding training phase?

Track and field brings together running, jumping and throwing events. Athletes develop speed, power, strength and endurance through effective training and sound nutrition. Consistent eating habits help build and maintain strength, provide fuel and fluids, and support recovery across indoor, outdoor and training seasons.

Alongside event-specific training, athletes need nutrition that fuels mind and body in class and on the track.

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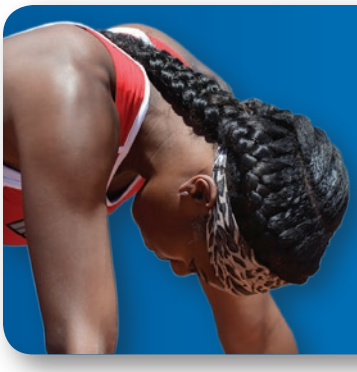
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TRAINING PHASES

College track and field athletes move through different training intensities and stages according to event and individual needs. Despite these differences, the year has three main phases: preseason, competition/championship and offseason.

PRESEASON:

Preseason brings the year's hardest workouts. Whatever your program, effective fueling and hydration support daily progress and peak performance.

- **Daily meals and snacks.** Track and field athletes often skip breakfast, eat little at lunch or between meals, then consume most calories after practice. Eating regularly throughout the day supplies carbs for energy, protein for muscle repair and growth, and healthy fat portions for endurance and healing.

  Use preseason to test foods and meal timing and find what suits you. Planning meals and snacks prevents rushed, less nutritious choices. It also supports weight and body-composition goals and makes the transition to competition easier.

- **A preseason eating routine.** Despite differences in size, build and event, every athlete needs consistent nutrition. Calorie, carbohydrate and protein needs peak in preseason because sessions are longer and more intense. Match portions to your own needs and goals.

  - Begin each day with a nourishing breakfast of varied nutrient-rich foods. If morning eating feels unfamiliar, start with small, simple choices to build a daily habit. Examples include:
    - Apple slices with peanut butter
    - Half a bagel with peanut butter and honey
    - A small tortilla with sliced turkey and spinach
    - ½ cup trail mix of nuts, dried fruit, cereal and pretzels
  - Muscles need fuel before and after practice. Have a small, nutritious snack two to three hours after breakfast. Plan portable choices that fit in a school bag or lunch box.
  - Lunch tops up glycogen before afternoon practice, supplying energy for a productive training session.
  - Midpractice fuel may help during sessions over an hour or in hot, humid conditions. Alongside fluids, add carbs from gels or chews, bananas, orange slices, grapes, applesauce pouches or granola bars.
  - Cooling down and stretching do not finish practice: a recovery meal or snack does. Refueling prepares you for the next day's workout or event. Use the simple three-step recovery approach in the inset.
  - Finish the day with a balanced dinner to continue recovery and meet calorie and nutrient needs. Include whole-grain carbs, lean protein, vegetables and heart-healthy fats. Preparing meals at the start of the week can save time and money.

RECOVERY NUTRITION IN THREE STEPS

Within 30 minutes of finishing:

1. Restore energy reserves with at least 50 grams of carbohydrate.
2. Repair and rebuild worked muscles with at least 15 grams of protein.
3. Replace fluid with at least 20 ounces of water and/or an electrolyte drink.





- **Hydration.** Plan both hydration and fluid replacement to reduce dehydration-related risks.
  - On waking, drink at least 16 ounces of water or another fluid, such as milk, 100 percent fruit juice or a smoothie.
  - Carry a large water jug and drink throughout the day, especially in the hours before practice.
  - Include foods rich in water and electrolytes, especially if you cramp easily: milk, yogurt, bananas, potatoes, dried-fruit-and-nut trail mix, deli meat and beef jerky.
  - Drink about 6 ounces every 15 to 20 minutes during practice. Water is enough for sessions under an hour. Add an electrolyte drink for longer practices or hot, humid training.
  - Track fluid losses. Replace each pound lost in practice with 20 to 24 ounces of water and/or electrolyte drink.

COMPETITION/CHAMPIONSHIP PHASE:

Fall is devoted to preparing body and mind for the long indoor and outdoor seasons. From January until mid-June, meets at home and away leave little time to discover which nutrition and hydration plan works. Develop that plan in preseason and carry it into competition.

- **Adjust portions.** Training continues during competition, but sessions are usually much shorter and less intense. Match portions to energy use. When tapering for a major meet, slightly reduce carbohydrate portions and add lean protein and vegetables. Keep meals varied and balanced. Every food group supports energy and recovery, so avoid removing whole groups.
- **Frequent travel.** Travel can complicate nutritious eating, but planning and preparation help maintain good habits. See the ***Eating on the Road*** fact sheet.



Variety and balance matter during competition. Keep every food group, since each has a role in supplying energy and supporting recovery.

- **Pre-meet meal.** Top up carbohydrate stores for energy and concentration and enter the event fully hydrated. A good pre-meet meal matters, but it cannot compensate for poor eating all week. Meal type and timing differ among athletes. These general guidelines can support energy and performance:
  - Have a small meal or snack one to two hours before the event, or a larger one three to four hours beforehand.
  - Emphasize carbohydrate-rich foods and drinks, moderate lean protein, and small amounts of fat and fiber.
  - Choose simple, familiar foods used in preseason. Save new foods for another day.
  - Keep your usual hydration routine with water and/or electrolyte drinks.



EATING WELL ON THE ROAD

- Pack nourishing snacks for long drives and flights: nut-and-dried-fruit trail mix, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, tuna pouches, whole fruit, granola bars and bottled water.
- At stops and layovers, choose places offering grilled or lean meat, salads, nutritious carbs and vegetables.
- Look up restaurants near your hotel before travel and plan meals you can order.

OFFSEASON:

After the season, take time to rest and recover before summer training. Use the break to improve eating habits, practice meal preparation and learn recipes. Offseason also provides time to work on body weight and composition according to your goals.

Offseason programs differ but are usually shorter and less intense. Lower training means lower energy use, so adjust portions and food choices to avoid unwanted weight gain. Emphasize lean protein and vegetables while reducing carbohydrate-based foods.

