

Nutrition is super important for athletes to maximize training and performance. All athletes, especially skaters, need to eat a variety of foods to make sure they are getting all their nutrients. Food is what fuels our bodies so that we can get through those long programs and consistently land jumps.

***The basics:***

*Balanced Meals:* Food keeps your body going just like gas keeps a car running. If a car is consistently running on empty, it will eventually run out of gas and not be able to function properly. The same goes for an athlete’s body. Skipping meals or not eating enough will cause poor performance and increase the likelihood for injury. An athlete should eat three meals a day that consist of carbohydrates, protein and fat. The day should begin with breakfast to start the day with a full tank of gas!

*Carbohydrates:* These are foods such as pasta, bread, and rice. Whole grains are the best source of carbohydrates because they have more fiber which will keep you feeling fuller longer. Make sure half of your grains are whole!

*Protein:* These foods are meat, nuts, beans, seafood and eggs. The best choices for meats are the leanest ones and try to avoid breaded or fried meats. Choose raw, unsalted nuts and natural peanut butter to cut out unnecessary calories.

*Fat*: Fat is usually seen as the enemy but that is not true!! Some foods with fat are good for your body, such as olive oil, avocados, and nuts. Trans fats are the type of fat that should be avoided. An easy way to tell is if it can stand on its own like butter and shortening, it is good to stay away! Foods like cakes, cookies, ice cream should be limited and eaten in moderation.

Snacks: Snacks are very important to eat between meals, especially for athletes who are continuously working out and burning calories. In between the three meals a day, two snacks should also be eaten (one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon) to keep energy levels high. Skating sessions are typically in the afternoon so it is important to eat a snack of carbohydrates between school and skating to prevent being hungry and feeling sluggish.

Hydration: When working out, athletes are often sweating. In order to replace water that is lost from the body, the athlete must remember to drink! It is recommended to drink one cup of fluid 15 minutes prior to exercise, and then 7 ounces to 10 ounces for every 15 to 20 minutes of activity. Water is the best option; sports drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade provide hydration and carbohydrates for energy but should really only be consumed during long workouts and hot weather.

Special Diets: Vegetarians can get enough protein in their diets without consuming meats by choosing foods such as nuts, nut products, beans, tofu, and soy products.