

PROTEIN: POWERHOUSE PERFORMANCE

For High School Athletes

Why protein?

As an athlete, you have good reason to focus on nutrition to excel at your sport. Your after-practice meals and snacks should contain both carbohydrates and protein. Carbohydrates restore glycogen in the muscles so the body is ready to perform at its best. Protein helps the muscles and bones replenish and rebuild after activity.

Do all milks contain the same amount of protein?

Milk naturally contains 8 grams of high-quality protein per cup regardless of fat content. Milk alternatives vary in protein, so read the labels to compare. Soy beverages may have 5 to 8 grams and almond beverages may have 1 to 2 grams.

What about lactose intolerance?

If you are lactose intolerant, you can still enjoy dairy!

- Try *lactose-free milk*. It's still milk but without lactose.
- *Yogurt* contains helpful bacteria that break down lactose, making it easy to digest.
- *Hard cheeses* contain little or no lactose.

When is the best time to eat protein?

Including protein evenly throughout the day is best for muscle building and repair. Start your day with high-quality protein such as an egg, a container of yogurt or milk in cereal. Protein at breakfast helps you focus more clearly and be alert at school. Aim for 20 to 30 grams of protein at each meal.

How much protein does a growing teen athlete need?

Although protein needs vary depending on the sport you play, your age and other factors, a general guide is to multiply your weight in pounds by 0.5 to 0.8 grams of protein. Most teens can meet protein needs by having 3 servings a day of dairy plus other high-quality protein sources such as lean meat and poultry, fish, beans, lentils and eggs.

What is whey protein powder?

In cheese-making, milk is divided into curds and whey. Whey can be powdered, is high in protein and has almost no lactose.

Eat protein throughout the day for:

More energy. Protein at each meal and snack helps keep your energy constant throughout the day by preventing blood sugar highs and lows.

Strong bones. Milk includes the nutrients needed for bones: protein, calcium, vitamin D, phosphorus and magnesium.

Strong muscles. Both exercise and protein are needed to build and repair muscles. Protein, before and after a strenuous game or practice, helps your muscles stay strong.

Which foods contain protein?

16-22 grams per serving	11-15 grams per serving	6-10 grams per serving	2-5 grams per serving
Beef, chicken, pork, turkey (3 ounces)	Fish and shellfish (3 ounces)	Milk (1 cup) or yogurt (6-ounce container)	Brown rice (1 cup cooked)
Deli meat (3 ounces)	Beans and lentils (½ cup)	Cheese (1½ ounces)	Oatmeal (1 cup cooked)
Greek yogurt (6-ounce container)	2 eggs	Nuts, small handful (¼ cup)	Broccoli, chopped (1 cup cooked)
Meal replacement bar with whey protein	Personal pizza	Peanut butter (1 table-spoon)	Whole-grain bread slice (1 slice)

QUICK & EASY MEAL AND SNACK IDEAS

Encourage your student-athlete to prepare for practices and games. Consider easy grab 'n go options when planning meals and snacks for home, school, or on the road.

Include milk with meals and select lactose-free milk and dairy products for those with lactose intolerance.

BREAKFAST

- 2 slices of whole-grain toast topped with nut butter and banana slices.
- Milk and yogurt fruit smoothie and [homemade breakfast bar](#)
- [Apple Pie Overnight Oats](#): Overnight oats with milk, yogurt cinnamon and apple sauce



LUNCH

- **Tuna Salad Wrap**: Canned tuna + plain Greek yogurt + shredded carrots + sunflower seeds. Stuff into a tortilla, sandwich thin, or pita bread.
- **Lunch Box Power Pasta Salad**: Pasta + avocado + corn + carrot + black beans + turkey + cheese. Toss with yogurt dressing.

DINNER

- Chicken breast OR tofu with rice and steamed vegetables of choice.
- **Spinach Salad**: Fresh spinach + avocado + tomato + chickpeas + chopped almonds. Top with oil and vinegar-based dressing.



Pre-Workout

- Whole grain cereal with milk
- String cheese and whole grain crackers
- Chocolate milk and orange
- Carrots with hummus
- Banana with nut butter
- Smoothie made with Greek yogurt, milk, and fruit
- Granola or oats with raisins/dried apple slices

Post-Workout

- Chocolate milk
- Cottage cheese and pineapple
- Apple or pear slices with cheese stick
- Yogurt with granola and berries
- Whole grain bread or wrap with lean turkey, cheese and pepper slice
- Pretzels and peanut butter
- Trail mix with nuts and dried fruit
- Peanut butter and banana sandwich
- Pita chips and hummus
- Whole wheat bagel with cream cheese
- Hard-boiled egg and toast

After a big game or tough practice, replenish:

- **potassium** with lots of fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods.
- **protein** with these protein-rich recovery snacks.

