

# Sports Nutrition Introduction

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Many athletes are perplexed about the role of nutrition in sports performance. Historically, athletes have tried all sorts of diets, gimmicks, vitamins and drugs to gain a competitive edge. It is suspected that illicit use of anabolic steroids as well as amphetamines are part of today's sporting world, from the level of high school athletics to the Olympics and professional sports. This abuse has prompted athletic regulatory agencies to initiate drug testing procedures. The use of these drugs makes athletes sacrifice long term health for short term gains. In response, there is a growing interest and recognition for safer, natural "steroid replacements" or performance boosters. These products usually consist of vitamins and minerals, herbs or amino acid preparations.

In addition to athletic skill and nutritional boosters, success in sports may be determined by the athlete's ability to make muscle from protein and energy out of carbohydrates. An increased understanding of the metabolism of exercise has allowed scientists to identify some of the factors that limit performance or cause fatigue. These factors are: impairment of fluid balance, impairment of electrolyte mineral balance, deficient membrane transport and depletion of food fuels.

Training produces a number of physiological adaptations that allow the athlete to produce more work and delay the onset of fatigue. Be that as it may, the athlete should prepare for competition by understanding the nutritional factors limiting performance and making use of nutrition to reduce the effects of these limiting factors.

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