

# Macronutrient Needs for Athletes



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## Did You Know ...

Guidelines suggest that we consume 45—65% of calories from carbohydrates, 10—35% from protein, and 20—35% from fat.

For people who exercise less than one hour each day, there is no difference in nutrition recommendations from non-active individuals.

For athletes who exercise longer than one hour a day, there are some different nutrition considerations.

For example, power athletes require more protein than endurance athletes. For specific nutrition advice, consult a registered dietitian nutritionist.



To reach peak performance and stay healthy and strong, athletes require a balance of the three macronutrients: carbohydrates, fats, and protein.

## Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the main source of fuel for your muscles. Simple carbohydrates, found in fruits, milk and sugary refined foods, are the most accessible for your muscles to use. Many of the refined foods, however, come with very few nutrients and are thus “empty calories”. Complex carbohydrates, found in pastas, vegetables, legumes, and whole grain products, digest more slowly.

The majority of your carbohydrates, both simple and complex, should come from fruits, vegetables, legumes, milk, and whole grains, rather than refined foods.

## Fats

Exercise is initially fueled by carbohydrates, but during longer bouts of exercise, our stores of carbohydrate are depleted, and fat becomes a major source of energy.

Since fats are a vital source of energy for athletic performance, fat consumption should stay above 15-20 percent of daily calories.

## Protein

Protein helps build and repair muscle tissue. Consuming protein-rich foods within a couple hours of exercise helps to increase muscle repair and growth. Athletes do not need excessive amounts of protein. The maximum recommended amount is 35% of daily calories. Make sure to eat enough carbohydrate and fat as well, so that your body can use protein to maintain muscle, rather than burning it for energy.

Depending on training, it is recommended that athletes get 0.55—0.9 grams of protein per pound of body weight each day. (1.2 –2 grams/kg)