

# PERFORMANCE PLAYBOOK



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## Sports Nutrition Myths

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Athletes are always looking for an edge against the competition, and what an athlete chooses for fuel can help. Because sports nutrition is an evolving area of sports science, it is prone to myths and misconceptions. You've probably heard all of these myths, but do you know the facts?

### **Myth No. 1: Sugar should be avoided before training and competition.**

Sugar eaten before competition increases blood levels of glucose and insulin, which is not a bad thing. Carbohydrate, whether in food or drink, taken before exercise can improve performance. An athlete who is not fueled is a tired athlete who can't perform at his or her best.

### **Myth No. 2: Sports drinks are only needed for exercise lasting more than an hour.**

Sports drinks can be beneficial in activities that last less than one hour, especially if the exercise is intense or occurs in hot, humid conditions. Professional athletes aren't the only ones who benefit from sports drinks. Competitive athletes who play football, soccer, tennis, field hockey, or basketball can benefit from the carbohydrate and electrolytes in sports drinks. Drinking sports drinks encourages athletes to drink more, which is important since dehydration can occur in exercise lasting less than one hour. Using sports drinks is an easy way to improve performance and to fight dehydration.

### **Myth No. 3: Body image distortion is only a women's issue.**

Men are increasingly exposed to supermale images, from the bodies of professional athletes to the covers of men's magazines, men are increasingly dissatisfied with their body appearance. Body dysmorphic disorder, the preoccupation with an imagined or slight defect

in one's appearance, is recognized as a psychological disorder. Many coaches and athletes may be unaware that it occurs in both males and females.

### **Myth No. 4: Vitamins and minerals give athletes extra energy.**

Vitamins and minerals act as co-factors to unlock the chemical energy stored in food, but by themselves they do not give an athlete extra energy. A meal plan rich in grains, vegetables, fruits, meat, and dairy gives athletes energy. This food is also a vehicle of entry for the vitamins and minerals that the body needs to unlock food energy. A multivitamin mineral supplement might be necessary for some athletes, but by itself, it will not provide extra energy.

### **Fight sports nutrition myths.**

- Be wary of products not backed by published research.
- Look for information provided by respected organizations, such as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the American Dietetic Association (ADA), and Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutritionists (SCAN).
- Bring in a sports dietitian for a workshop with your team on translating the science of nutrition into food plans.
- Check the Gatorade Sports Science Institute Web site at [www.gssiweb.org](http://www.gssiweb.org) for information.

