Nutrition Recommendations, Tips, and Guidelines for Athletes

**\*\*\*HYDRATION IS KEY\*\*\***

All athletes must stay hydrated to avoid muscle fatigue & cramping, mental fatigue & fogginess.

Drink 17-20 ounces of water two to three hours before the start of exercise.

Drink 8 ounces of fluid 20 to 30 minutes prior to exercise or during warm-up.

Drink 7-10 ounces of fluid every 10 to 20 minutes during exercise.

Drink an additional 8 ounces of fluid within 30 minutes after exercising.

Drink 16-24 ounces of fluid for every pound of body weight lost after exercise.

I always recommend that athletes carry a water bottle with them throughout the day to remind them to remain hydrated – drink even when you’re not thirsty. **When you’re thirsty, you’re already dehydrated!**

**\*\*Carbohydrates are the body’s main source of energy – not protein!\*\***

Athletes NEED carbohydrates! Your body uses these as its first and main source of energy. Carbohydrates provide your muscles with energy so they don’t get fatigued and you don’t “hit the wall”.

It’s recommended that athletes eat a high-carb meal no later than 2 – 3 hours before practice and/or contests. This meal should consist of 500-1000 calories, be low in fat, high in complex carbs (breads, cold cereal, baked potato, low or non-fat milk, pasta, fruits, & vegetables), and a moderate amount of lean protein (baked or boiled chicken – not fried, nuts, soy products like tofu). Avoid fried foods and limit sweets like desserts and other sugars. \*Hydrate with water (or mix with a sports drink) **DO NOT DRINK SODA**\*

Snack between events (track athletes, gymnasts, wrestlers) or between quarters/periods (basketball, volleyball, soccer, hockey, and football). Fruits like oranges, bananas, apples, and grapes are recommended as well as pretzels or crackers.

Breakfast should be a priority EVERY DAY.

Ideas:

Oatmeal with low-fat or non-fat milk and fruit

Whole wheat bagel or toast with peanut butter

Whole wheat toast, bagel, or English muffin with egg and low-fat cheese

**Post-Game/Practice**

Priority #1 after contests and practices should be to rehydrate, even if you’re not thirsty. See earlier hydration notes for guidelines.

Carbohydrates should be priority #2 in order to replace the glycogen your muscles used during your workout. This will reduce muscle soreness and aid in recovery. Consume carbs as soon as possible after the completion of your contest or practice (sports drink, smoothie, low-fat chocolate milk, fruits, etc.).

Protein is priority #3 – small amounts are needed to aid in muscle recovery and to help your body transport nutrients. Examples are lean meats like chicken or turkey, nuts, legumes, and soy products like TOFU. Low-fat milk also has a small amount of protein.

Post-game meal should be consumed within 2 hours of completion of the event.

**Other tips for Daily Food Intake**

Eat whole-grain foods instead of white breads and rice whenever possible.

The Institute of Medicine recommends 130 grams of carbs per day (this is on average the minimum amount of glucose your brain uses each day). It is recommended that your daily intake of carbs is between 45 and 65% of your daily calories.

Eat fruits and vegetables whenever possible. These give you not only carbohydrates but also other vitamins your body needs to functional at its best.

Cut back on fatty foods, although all athletes (endurance athletes especially) need some fat in their diet.

Cut back on sugary drinks like soda and juices that aren’t 100% fruit juice.

Go for real protein before the supplements. Your body recognizes the proteins (amino acids that make up proteins) found naturally in foods like dairy, meat, nuts, and legumes. It doesn’t always recognize and digest properly those found in supplements. Your body can only absorb and use so many grams of protein before it turns that unused protein to fat.

If your athlete has special dietary needs (i.e. is lactose intolerant, has diabetes, has celiac’s disease, or any food allergies) and would like specific alternatives or have specific questions please contact me directly at amandaw@villagefit.com or have your athlete come see me after school in the wellness center.