

TRANSITIONING INTO HEALTHY EATING



SHUTTERSTOCK IMAGES

Now that I'm away from home, it's hard to decide what to eat. I know that better nutrition will help my performance, but it's hard to figure out what healthy eating means for me. Are there some changes I can make to my meals to keep my energy level high?

HERE ARE THREE STEPS TO HELP YOU IN YOUR TRANSITION:

1. Gain awareness of your current eating patterns and habits:

- Record what you eat for three days to help you determine the changes that will make the biggest impact. Include details such as portion size, beverages and condiments.
- Write it down or use an app to get an overall picture of the changes that would be helpful.
- Record your feelings, energy level and strength before, during and after workouts.

2. Plan ahead, decide on action steps, and gather the tools to help you:

- Reflect on your food journal to determine if there are patterns or habits that are helpful or could be improved.
- Aim for impactful, yet realistic, changes.
- Examples of changes – carrying a water bottle to promote better water intake, if you find you drink more sugary beverages than water; preparing healthy snacks ahead of time to keep in your backpack.

3. Put your goals into action, and continue to record your progress:

- **Eat breakfast** – Choose breakfast instead of the snooze button, so you don't miss out on easy energy! Whole-grain toast and scrambled eggs are a quick and balanced example.
- **Eat more during the first half of your day** – Switch to a heavier breakfast and morning snack, and note the change in your energy level!
- **Watch portions** – Fill only one or two plates at dining hall buffets.
- **Eat more vegetables** – Put at least one vegetable on your plate before anything else. Brightly colored vegetables usually offer the most nutrition.
- **Create healthy side dishes** – Build a brightly colored salad for your side dish. Top it with seeds, egg whites and beans, instead of croutons and full-fat cheese.
- **Choose lower-fat cheese and milk** – Change to 2 percent or skim dairy for the same proteins and carbohydrates, but less saturated fat and cholesterol.
- **Avoid creamy salad dressing** – Change to vinaigrette or other oil-based dressings for healthier fats.
- **Avoid sugary cereal** – Read labels and avoid cereals with lots of added sugar. Fill your bowl with extra low-fat milk for added protein.
- **Look out for calories in condiments** – Try healthier toppings such as peanut butter, plain Greek yogurt, low-fat cottage cheese, avocado slices or salsa.
- **Have a bedtime snack if you have an early workout the next morning** – This will give you a morning boost! A serving of cottage cheese with fruit is a great example.

(For the rewards of healthier eating, turn the page.)

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Deciding to make nutrition changes will pay off! Some of the rewards of healthier eating include:

Increased energy during activity and throughout the day

Eating more whole grains, fruits and vegetables gives you more energy to perform at practice, in the weight room and during competition. This is because carbohydrates provide direct fuel to your muscles. In addition, the vitamins and minerals in healthier foods help create and release energy in the muscle.



Decreased risk for injury

Eating more lean proteins, low-fat dairy (or dairy alternatives), fruits, vegetables and whole grains will provide the minerals you need to keep your bones strong and supported by the muscles protecting them. In addition, the increased energy you'll have will help decrease strains and tears due to muscle fatigue.

Better recovery

When you're making better food choices, you might notice you're not as sore anymore, you can tolerate heavier weights and you can endure more intense practices. Amino acids and minerals in lean proteins and dairy specifically help rebuild torn muscle fibers that result from intense workouts.

Each time you make a change, challenge yourself to build on it with even more action steps. That way, you'll eventually make healthy eating your habit.

