

Proper nutrition for athletes

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Received : 06.03.2017; Accepted : 29.09.2017

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■ **ABSTRACT**

There is no doubt that the type, amount, composition and timing of food intake can Dramatically affect exercise performance, recovery from exercise, body weight and Composition and health. When exercise or physical work increase to more than 1 hour per day, the importance of adequate energy and nutrient intakes becomes more critical. As the American public becomes more concerned with health and health issues, the interest in nutrition and physical activity has increased. This interest in health has also heightened the sale of supplements, herbal preparations and weight loss products, all aimed at improving health, preventing or curing disease, improving sport performance and changing body composition and weight. Sports nutrition's the practical science of hydrating and fuelling before, during and after exercise. Executed properly, sports nutrition can help promote optimal training and performance. Done incorrectly or ignored, it can derail training and hamper performance. Active individuals need more energy (calories) each day than their sedentary counterparts assuming individuals are the same age, body size and participate in similar non-physically active daily activities. Maintaining fluid and electrolyte balance means that active individuals need to replace the water and electrolytes lost in sweat. Nearly 25 per cent of Americans use dietary supplements daily and ~35-40 per cent use them occasionally. For individuals engaged in physical activity, the estimates are as high as 50-100 per cent (Sobal and Marquart, 1994). We now know that what you eat and drink can significantly impact health and exercise performance. The active individual needs to make sure they consume enough energy to maintain a healthy body weight for their activity level and sport, while reducing risks of chronic disease. Active individuals need more carbohydrate and protein than sedentary individuals and should not restrict fat intake too severely. Keeping well-hydrated and replacing fluids lost during exercise is also a key part of feeling good and performing at one's best. Active individuals dieting for weight loss may need to supplement, but in general supplements should be used with caution and after careful examination of the diet.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Nutrition, Sports Nutrition, Physical activity

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Laxmeshwar, Basanagouda and Hiremath, Sandesh R. (2017). Proper nutrition for athletes. *Internat. J. Phy. Edu.*, **10** (1&2) : 34-45, DOI : 10.15740/HAS/IJPE/10.1and2/34-45.

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