



### Step #1 Eat a healthy diet

#### Choose the right foods

Choosing healthy foods will improve your sports performance. Why? Because good nutrition builds strong muscles and gives you the energy to compete to your maximum potential. Most sports experts recommend that you eat the following types of foods:

- **Carbohydrates:** Bread, pasta, tortillas, cereal, and rice should make up 6 to 11 servings of your diet every day. It is easy to grab a bagel or granola bar on the go for quick, healthy energy.
- **Protein and dairy:** Fish, chicken, and beans should make up 2 to 3 servings of your diet every day. Three to four servings of low fat milk, yogurt, and cheese are all important, too.
- **Fruits and vegetables:** 5 servings a day will keep you at the top of your game.
- **Fat:** Fried foods, fast food, and fatty meats should be eaten only once in a while.

#### Eat the right amount of food

Eating the right amount of food is also very important. The amount of food (calories) you need to eat depends on your sex, weight, body type, and activity level. To get an idea of how many calories you need to eat every day visit [mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov) and click on “MyPyramid Plan.” This estimate will give you a customized food guide based on your age, weight and daily physical activity.

#### Drink enough fluids

Drinking a lot of fluids will improve your sports performance and prevent heatstroke and dehydration. Heatstroke is a serious illness. It can happen when you exercise intensely on hot days. Prevent dehydration by following these rules:

- Drink 2 tall glasses of water an hour before you exercise, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Drink another glass of water (8 oz.) after every 15 minutes of vigorous exercise, even if you're not thirsty. If exercising for more than 90 minutes, sports drinks like *Gatorade* (along with water) may be helpful.
- Rest in the shade if possible and wear a hat and sunscreen, if exercising outside.

### Step #2 Prevent sports injuries

Sports injuries are common and can hurt your sports performance. You can prevent many injuries with good planning and self-care.

- **Proper conditioning:** Exercise regularly all year, including the pre-season and off-season if you play team sports. Warm up, cool down, and stretch after every workout.

- **Avoid overtraining:** Excessive training, sudden changes in training, or training for multiple sports at the same time can increase your risk for injuries. Do not ignore pain! It's your body's way of telling you something is wrong. It's okay to go easy or take time off to recover.
- **Use the proper equipment:** Make sure you are using the right equipment and that it fits properly. Have your coach check the fit of your protective pads, mouthguard, helmet, etc.

### Step #3 Develop healthy habits

Developing healthy habits can improve your performance by giving you more energy to compete. Here are the basics:

- **Get enough sleep:** Most young people need at least 9 hours of sleep every night, and some need more.
- **Don't smoke or chew tobacco:** Tobacco can hurt your mouth and lungs and decrease your overall sports performance. It also gives you bad breath, yellow teeth, and smelly clothes and hair.
- **Don't drink alcohol or take drugs:** Alcohol contains a lot of calories. Drinks like beer and drugs like pot that give you the “munchies” can increase your weight and make you bloated. They also can increase your risk for injuries and accidents, get you kicked off the team, suspended from school, or cause you to lose your job.

#### Sprains and strains

Sprains and strains are common sports injuries for people of any age. Proper treatment will help control pain and swelling and speed your recovery.

## **Sprains: stretches / ligament tears**

Treatment includes:

- Rest. Try not to use the leg or arm as much, and keep it elevated for 24 hours.
- Apply crushed ice for 15 to 20 minutes every 4 hours for 24 hours.
- Wrap with an elastic bandage for 48 hours.
- If the doctor or other health care professional gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
- If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, take an over-the-counter one, such as ibuprofen (*Advil* or *Motrin*) or naproxen (*Aleve*), to reduce pain as needed. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor told you to.

## **Strains: stretches / muscle tears**

Treatment includes:

- Massage with ice for 15 to 20 minutes every 6 hours for the first day.
- If still sore or stiff after 48 hours, apply heat (heating pad or warm compress) for 10 minutes, 3 times a day, followed by stretching until the soreness is better.
- If the doctor or other health care professional gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
- If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor or other health care professional if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless your doctor or other health care professional told you to.

## **You should call your doctor if:**

- The pain is severe, has not improved in 3 days, has not gone away in 2 weeks, or comes back again with activity.
- The bone is crooked or deformed, or if you can't walk without limping.

## **Losing and gaining weight**

### **Losing weight**

If you and your doctor decide that you need to lose weight, that's fine. But if you are not overweight for your body type, weight loss can be dangerous and is not recommended. If you have questions about your weight, ask your doctor. Some general guidelines for weight loss are:

- Limit soda, juice drinks, sports drinks, and other sugar-sweetened drinks (lemonade, sweetened ice tea). Drink water instead.
- Avoid fried foods, fatty meats, and "junk foods" (fast food, candy, chips).
- Drink a glass of water before meals and eat smaller portions.
- Eat no more than 2 snacks a day.

### **Gaining weight and building muscles**

Gaining weight that exceeds your ideal body weight is not recommended because the extra weight puts more stress on your heart, bones, and joints. If you want to build muscles, be smart:

- Do not use steroids, creatine, or "andro." Steroids will stunt your growth, make your acne worse, and increase your risk for sexual problems and early heart attacks. Supplements like creatine and "andro" may sound like shortcuts, but they can cause serious health problems like vomiting, heart problems, and kidney damage. Why take the risk? To learn more, click the "Young Adult Health" link on your physician's home page, available through [kp.org/mydoctor](http://kp.org/mydoctor).
- Avoid protein pills, shakes, and powders. Too much protein can decrease your sports performance and endurance and will not give you bigger muscles. When taken in large amounts, they can also cause health problems like diarrhea, dehydration, and kidney problems.

- If you are under 16, avoid lifting heavy weights (power lifting). Strength training with lighter weights is okay, but should be supervised by an adult.

## **Exercising with asthma**

Having asthma should not stop you from participating in sports. In fact, exercise will help keep asthma under control and help reduce the number of asthma flare-ups. If you have chronic asthma, it is important to keep your asthma under control by checking your peak flow meter reading regularly and following the plan that you and your doctor have decided on.

Other things that you can do include:

- Avoid exercising in cold, dry air and where there is air pollution.
- Avoid exercising outdoors on days when you are having allergy signs or symptoms.
- Try swimming for exercise. The moist air may help.
- Use 2 puffs of your bronchodilator inhaler like albuterol (*Ventolin*, *Proventil*) 15 to 20 minutes before you exercise, *if recommended by your doctor*.

## **More resources**

- The Physician and Sportsmedicine Online: [physsportsmed.com/personal.htm](http://physsportsmed.com/personal.htm)
- National Youth Sports Safety Foundation: [nyssf.org](http://nyssf.org)
- [cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports)
- Connect to our Web site at [kp.org](http://kp.org) to access health and drug encyclopedias, Healthy Living programs, health classes, and much more.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.