



Fuel for Young Athletes

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This book probably could not have come out at a better time. According to a growing number of studies, today's teens are becoming grossly overweight, eating too much, exercising too little, and flirting with diabetes and other ailments previously reserved for people much older.

This book arguably will encourage young people to eat more conscientiously, slim down, and participate successfully in sports. It does not throw around hundred-dollar medical terms or try to impose impractical diets on the reader. The author is adept at distilling the science of nutrition into useful, easy-to-understand information that can be followed by teenage athletes and their parents and coaches. As a sports nutrition expert with more than twenty-three years of experience, she specializes in helping teens develop normal eating habits. She is also a nutrition consultant to the National Football League's Washington Redskins and the Elite Athlete Training System.

The text, structured as both a reference book and a guide to immediate needs, provides information on how the body reacts to carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, as well as explaining the roles of cholesterol, vitamins, and minerals. The reference guide can be used by coaches, parents, and athletes to plan meals before and after activities such as soccer games, swimming meets, or ongoing training regimens to build strength and endurance.

"What you eat within the first few minutes after a workout or competition is known as your 'recovery meal,'" writes the author. "This small meal is the most important and underrated part of training. It sets the stage for how the athlete feels for the rest of the day and affects the next day's training or competition."

Within thirty minutes of finishing a workout, an athlete needs to feed his muscles with glycogen, a necessary fuel, such as a banana with yogurt. Since many young athletes do not take the time to eat decent meals, the author devotes several pages to recipes for easy-to-fix meals. One nutritious, quick meal, for example, is a veggie wrap made with flour tortillas, hummus, shredded lettuce and chopped cucumber.

Whether the book produces any Olympians or not, its easy-to-understand format and valuable information could very well provide educational fuel for young athletes and put teens on the path to better health and improved sports performance.

KARL KUNKEL (January / February 2004)

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