



Nutrition for Performance-Driven Men

For most men, trying to eat optimally can be a Herculean feat. Men are bombarded with conflicting dietary information from a wide spectrum of sources, ranging from sound scientific research to media tidbits to hearsay and personal anecdotes from friends.

So what should a man eat? Here's a basic primer on the nutrients that active guys need, from Dave Grotto, RD, LDN, author of *101 Foods That Could Save Your Life!* (Bantam 2008) and president of NutritionHousecall LLC (www.nutritionhousecall.com).

Pumping Up Protein

The prevailing standard for protein recommendations is 1.2–1.4 grams (g) per kilogram (kg) of body weight for endurance athletes and up to 1.7 g per kg of body weight for resistance and strength training athletes, according to the American Dietetic Association. So, if a man weighs 180 pounds, that translates to 98–139 g. This level can be easily achieved in a healthy diet that derives at least 15%–20% of its calories from protein.

"[Men need] protein sources that contain all of the essential amino acids [to] make muscle, because we can't make these amino acids ourselves," says author David L. Katz, MD, MPH, medical contributor

for ABC News and director and co-founder of the Yale Prevention Research Center. He says the best sources of protein are egg whites, meat, dairy products and a few plant sources, such as soy. Poultry, protein shakes and fish are other good sources of high-quality protein.

Carbo Loading

According to Jennie McCary, MS, RD, LD, IDEA's nutrition contributing editor, men should get 45%–65% of their total daily calories from complex carbs. This would translate to about 337–488 g of carbs each day for a 180-pound male.

Men need to focus on getting adequate supplies of whole grains (e.g., brown rice, whole oats, wheat breads and cereals) and also of starchy vegetables, like squash, which provide long-burning carbohydrates. All fruits and vegetables are nutrient-dense sources of carbohydrates. Katz also encourages men to add more fiber-rich sources, such as beans and lentils, to their regular diet.

Chewing the Fats

Men should get 30% of their daily calories from fat sources. According to McCary, that would break out as "10% from polyunsaturated fats, 10% from monounsaturated fats and no more than 10% from saturated fats." To sustain energy for training and competition, male athletes should not get less than 15% of their total calories from fat.

One way to incorporate healthier fats into the diet is to eat more omega-3-rich fatty fish such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon. Other good fat sources include plant oils, such as olive, flax and canola, and nuts

and seeds; flax oil can be added to fruit smoothies, for example. Omega-3-rich eggs and beef or dairy from grass-fed cattle might be other options, especially for men who don't eat fish. ■

The Top 6 Food Choices for Men

According to David L. Katz, MD, MPH, co-author of *The Flavor Point Diet: The Delicious, Breakthrough Plan to Turn Off Your Hunger and Lose the Weight for Good*, here are some of the optimal foods that men should add to their daily diet:

- 1. Eggs:** excellent sources of B vitamins, vitamin A and essential amino acids.
- 2. Fish:** excellent sources of protein. Fatty varieties of fish also provide anti-inflammatory omega-3 fats.
- 3. Nuts and seeds:** these "nutrition powerhouses" are a great source of fuel.
- 4. Fruits and veggies:** concentrated sources of antioxidants, especially when it comes to berries and darkly pigmented veggies, such as spinach. "High performance has been linked to more fruit and vegetable consumption," says Katz.
- 5. Chocolate:** the amino acid arginine and cocoa flavanoids both help blood flow in the arteries and are found in abundance in good quality chocolate products. "Try not to have more than 1–2 ounces per day," warns Katz. "It can be a calorie hazard!"
- 6. Beans and lentils:** they provide long-sustained energy and help regulate insulin and glucose levels.

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