



## Foods for Fuel

by Lisa D'Agrosa



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Healthy eating is important for everyone. As growing girls and athletes, more importantly volleyball players, it's necessary to give the body the nutrients it needs to fuel up. The key is to eat a balanced diet, full of a variety of foods to get a combination of protein, carbohydrates, fats, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

**Protein:** Many athletes worry they are not getting enough because protein is used to build muscle. With the exception of vegans, strict vegetarians who do not eat meat, dairy or eggs, most Americans get enough in their diet. Some protein foods, like cheese and beef, are high in saturated fats and cholesterol. Stay heart healthy and strong with lean proteins: egg whites, chicken, lean beef, tofu, turkey, low-fat milk/cheese/yogurt and beans.

**Carbohydrates:** Carbs have gotten a bad reputation recently but as an athlete, carbohydrate foods are necessary for muscle recovery and energy. Whole grain sources; whole wheat bread, brown rice, whole-grain cereals, whole wheat pasta, should make up at least half of your grain servings. Carbs are also found naturally in starchy vegetables; white and sweet potatoes, peas, corn, squash, and in fruits, which contain the natural sugar, fructose. Try and limit white breads, pastas, rice and foods with lots of added sugars like candy and other desserts. No need to eliminate these foods, just choose them less often.

**Fats:** Healthy fats are essential for vitamin absorption and fatty acids have many functions in the body. Olive oil, nuts, avocados and vegetable oils all contain the heart-healthy fats. Saturated fats-found in meat,



butter and ice cream- can lead to high cholesterol and should be used sparingly in the diet. Trans fats are the worst type of fats and are artificially made by a process called hydrogenation. Now labels are required to list grams of trans fat per serving but double check to see if the product has partially hydrogenated oils in the ingredient list.

**Breakfast:** This is the most important meal of the day-especially before a big tournament. Try and include some whole grain carbs and protein. It can be as simple as cereal and low-fat milk, or whole wheat toast with peanut butter and jelly. Students who eat breakfast do better in school and breakfast eaters don't overeat later in the day, which means that you won't weigh yourself down before a game with a big snack. If the only time to eat is right before the tournament; stick with something smaller, high in carbohydrates, low in fat and low in fiber. Fiber and fat stay in the stomach longer and can cause cramping and pain during game time!



**Calcium:** Your body builds up its bones in your teen years, which happens to be when most girls don't get enough calcium. Calcium is found in dairy foods like cheese, yogurt, and milk as well as; fortified soy milk and fortified orange juice, broccoli, canned salmon with bones, and almonds.

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