

# Weight Loss for Athletes

## Why is weight management important?

Proper diet and a good conditioning program play a vital role in athletic performance. Athletes who are not at their ideal playing weight will not perform as well as they might.

## What about fad diets and crash diets?

Fad diets are popular because they promise rapid weight loss. However, fad diets and crash diets actually result in a loss of lean muscle mass, water, and stored energy, not a loss of excess body fat. As a result, most athletes on such diets get tired early in the day or game and have a hard time finding the energy they need.

Athletes should make sure that the weight they lose is body fat and not lean body mass. Have your body fat measured by a trained professional.

## How can I lose weight?

How many calories you need depends on your age, sex, weight, and activity level. To maintain your weight, you have to take in the same number of calories you burn. It takes about 3,000 calories a day for the average 165-pound man who is 19 to 24 years old to maintain his weight. From ages 25 through 49, it takes 2,700 calories per day to maintain the same weight. An average 127-pound woman, 19 through 24 years old, will have to take in 2,100 calories daily for weight maintenance. From ages 25 through 49, it takes 1,900 calories per day. As you get older your calorie needs continue to decrease. Your body weight will change when there is a difference between calories in and calories out.

To lose weight you must eat less, exercise more, or both. Combining diet with exercise is a healthier, more balanced, and more successful way to lose weight than dieting alone.

One pound of body weight is equal to 3,500 calories. Eating 500 fewer calories per day will result in a weight loss of 1 pound per week. Eating 250 fewer calories per day combined with a 250-calorie deficit from exercise will also result in a weight loss of 1 pound per week.

On average, your goal should be to lose 1 to 2 lbs per week, and not more than 1.5% of your body weight. Losing more than this amount of weight per week can negatively affect your performance and health.

## Exercise

When you eat fewer calories and do a lot of aerobic exercise, your body uses muscle as fuel. This can cause you to lose muscle mass and strength. Make sure that you do a combination of strength training, anaerobic exercise, and aerobic exercise:

- Strength train 2 or 3 times per week using shorter workouts than normal (20 to 30 minutes).

- Do 1 or 2 aerobic sessions per week for 20 to 60 minutes at 60% to 80% maximum heart rate.
- Do 1 or 2 anaerobic sessions per week for up to 20 minutes.

You may also burn off calories simply by being more active during the day:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park farther away from the store and walk briskly through the parking lot.
- Do your errands on foot or on a bicycle instead of driving.

## Diet

To lose weight safely, it is important to eat a wide variety of foods. You should not reduce your protein intake, as this will lead to increased muscle breakdown. You should try to reduce both your carbohydrate and fat intake to reduce calories.

Because everyone is different, there are no general guidelines as to how much or how little you should eat or exercise. Use the charts below to help guide you in your food choices.

**Calories Burned per Minute of Activity**

120-lb person	160-lb person	200-lb person	Activity
2.5	3.4	4.6	Walking 2 miles an hour Bicycling 5 miles an hour
3.3	4.4	5.9	Walking 3 miles an hour Bicycling 6 miles an hour Badminton
5.1	6.8	9.0	Walking 4 miles an hour Dancing Calisthenics Bicycling 10 miles an hour Roller skating
6	8	10.6	Tennis (singles) Water skiing Basketball (recreational) Swimming (35 yards/minute)
6.5	8.7	11.6	Walking briskly 5 miles an hour
7.3	9.7	12.9	Jogging 5 miles an hour Bicycling 12 miles an hour
7.8	10.5	14.1	Downhill skiing Basketball (vigorous competition) Mountain climbing
9.2	12.3	16.4	Jogging 7 miles an hour Cross-country skiing Squash and handball
12.9	17.3	23.2	Running 9 miles per hour

**Good High-Carbohydrate Foods to Eat**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Calories</b>	<b>Carbohydrates (grams)</b>
Potato	220	50
Bagel	165	31
Biscuit	103	13
Whole wheat bread, 1 slice	85	20
Cereal, 1 cup	110	24
Oatmeal, 1/2 cup	66	12
Graham crackers, 2	60	11
Rice, 1 cup	223	50
Noodles, 1 cup	159	34
Pizza, cheese, 1 slice	290	39
Pretzels, 1 oz	106	21

**Making Proper Food Choices**

<b>Food Type</b>	<b>Choose</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
Meats	Fish, poultry without skin, lean cuts of beef, lamb, pork, shellfish	Fatty cuts of beef, lamb, pork; spare ribs, organ meats, regular cold cuts, sausage, hot dogs, bacon
Dairy	Skim or 1% milk, buttermilk  Nonfat or low-fat yogurt  Low-fat cheeses, farmer or pot cheeses (no more than 2 to 6 grams of fat per ounce)	Whole or 2% milk, whipped toppings, cream  Whole-milk yogurt, butter All natural cheeses (blue, cheddar, Swiss, Roquefort)
Eggs	Egg whites (2 whites = 1 whole egg in recipes)	Egg yolks
Fruits Vegetables	Fresh, frozen, canned, dried	Vegetables prepared in butter, cream, or other sauces
Breads Cereals	Whole wheat breads, whole wheat pasta, brown rice	Commercial baked goods: pies, cakes, doughnuts, croissants, muffins, biscuits, high-fat crackers, high-fat cookies

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