

Food is your fuel!

What you eat before, after and during training; on rest days and in between will affect how your body grows and how you perform. You are ultimately building the framework and foundations of the athlete you are now and that will remain part of you for the rest of your life.

Dietary habits and the food you eat can have a huge impact on your:

- Energy levels – so you aren't heading into training tired and flat
- Immune system – so you recover from sickness and injury faster
- Concentration, performance and focus in training sessions
- Body composition – to achieve gains in muscle mass and strength

Food = Kilojoules = Energy

Eating more food/energy than the body uses = *weight gain*

Eating less food/energy than the body uses = *weight loss*

All foods will provide 'energy' that can be burnt off – however, it's what you put in and how your body uses the energy it gets from food that makes a difference. Food provides a combination of different types of energy from macronutrients which are used differently to perform specific roles to help the body grow and function effectively.

Getting the right balance of macronutrients in adequate amounts is essential to target all the body's requirements to have the best effect on the body.

Where does energy come from?

Carbohydrates – the preferred fuel for muscle contraction to train and perform, they are essential for your brain to help with fine skills, agility and performance. Your body will constantly be using carbohydrates such as bread, pasta, rice, cereal, potatoes, corn, fruit, milk, yoghurt and sugars as fuel over the course of the day, especially during training and recovery.

Proteins – required to help build muscle tissue and repair muscle damage created during training. Dietary sources of protein such as red and white meat, fish, eggs, low fat dairy, tofu and legumes consumed consistently over the day provide sufficient amounts of protein to fuel muscle growth.

Fats – some fats are healthier than others, but any fats are only required in small amounts to aid delivery of fat soluble vitamins and act as a layer of insulation for protection. Fats aren't used as effectively during training especially for high intensity, short bursts of activity.

Food = Nutrients = Health

Consuming a variety of healthy foods throughout the day provides exposure to a range of essential micronutrients – required for increased immunity, muscle regeneration and repair of the body around training. The greatest variety of nutrients can be found in the following groups:

- Vegetables / Fruits – including a variety of different colours
- Whole grain and high fibre bread and cereal
- Lean meat, legumes, eggs and nuts
- Low fat dairy
- Oily fish/ walnuts and almonds / avocado in smaller amounts