



Nutrition for Gymnasts

Nutrition for Gymnasts



Introduction

Good nutrition can play a big part in a gymnast's effort to train and compete to the best of his/her ability. There are three things to consider in a gymnast's diet:

1. Adequate intake of fluids, energy and nutrient;
2. Proper recovery; and
3. Diets must be individually tailored as everyone has different requirements.

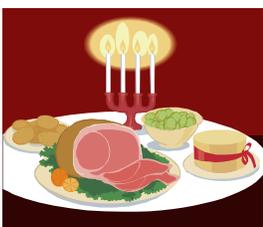
Adequate Intake



Gymnasts undergoing rigorous training require an adequate intake of **carbohydrates** for energy, **protein** to support the repair and growth of muscle and **nutrients and minerals** such as calcium and iron for overall health. A gymnast undertaking training can need almost twice the intake compared to another person of the same size and age.

Carbohydrates are crucial for providing energy for an active life should be nutritious rather than refined or fatty.

Protein is used for the repair and growth of muscle and is therefore very important part of a gymnast's diet. At least 1.4 g per kg of body mass is suggested.



Nutrients and minerals, such as calcium and iron, are very important for strong bones and good energy levels. Red meats, green vegetables and dairy products are the best sources, although supplements can also help in some circumstances.



As in all sports, and life in general, adequate fluid intake is vital and gymnastics is no exception. Dehydration of only 2% of body mass can reduce concentration and performance by up to 15%. So, it is important that gymnasts arrive to training hydrated having had adequate fluid intake throughout the day. During training intake should be up to 600 ml per hour depending on conditions. Water should be sufficient in most instances but sports drinks, such as Gatorade, have their place as well.

A proper lunch and something eaten just prior to training are very important to ensure that the gymnast can last through training. Adequate fluid intake is also crucial to being able to train properly. A gymnast should not start training in a dehydrated state.



Recovery



Immediately after training, a snack of protein, such as chicken or nuts, can assist in muscle recovery and growth. Fluid intake should be continued for two hours after training to return the body to a properly hydrated state. This is particularly important during summer. As a rule, it takes 1.5 litres of water to replace every litre lost through sweat. Sports drinks can be useful for this.

Individual Tailoring

As each gymnast has different requirements, metabolism and training commitments generalisations are all that can be made in a summary such as this. Each gymnast should work out what works best for them individually with their family, coach and physician.

The bottom line is:

Gymnasts should just eat normal healthy food and ensure that they drink sufficient quantities of fluid.