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Introduction

Congratulations! You are among the top athletes that will use nutrition to gain the unfair advantage on the softball field. I will equip you with the knowledge to improve the best tool you have, your body! What you eat will affect every part of your body from composition, energy, and mental focus. But before we dive into softball nutrition secrets, I want to introduce myself and why this component of softball is so important to me.

I played softball and basketball at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. After my playing career, I joined the softball coaching staff where my job was to manage the pitching staff. My degree is in biochemical engineering and I have attained various nutrition certifications along the way. Nutrition has always been a passion of mine.

The bulk of my knowledge has come from personal research done when I was finishing my college athletic career on the UA Huntsville basketball team during the 2008-09 season. I started to have mono like symptoms and missed several games in early November. After several mono and strep test, doctors told me I was perfectly normal. By late November, I could not keep solid foods down whatsoever! I was living off of smoothies and soup. Obviously, my coaches noticed my poor performance and my teammates began to get mad at me for not pulling my weight on the court. By December, I was so weak; I could not make it through an entire practice. Something had to change.

I continued to make doctor visits over the next 6 weeks with a trial and error style of diagnosis. I never had a positive test or found any relief from medications. It had been 3 months, I was in my prime, but my health was on a rapid decline. I started to think worst case scenarios after every failed attempt at finding a problem. I finally had a scan done at the hospital that showed my gall bladder functioning at 8%. After this discovery, I scheduled my surgery and had my gall bladder removed within the week.

Everything back to normal, right? Wrong. A typical 3 day recovery outpatient surgery, kept me in excruciating pain and on pain medication for the next 8 weeks. I was unable to function on the pain medication and finally decided to suck it up and deal with the pain. That lasted for another 8 months.

Finally, I found a connection to my pain and the food I was eating! I eliminated the problem and I am better than ever! Energy is restored, I dropped body fat, I am at a weight that I haven’t been at since my teens, and I have incredible mental clarity. My biggest regret is that I did not start paying attention to my symptoms and my diet from the beginning. After experiencing the relief I thought I would never have, I set out to educate everyone about the power of food, and is why I have studied to become a Nutrition Coach. Although I am very thankful to find my health, I lost my last year of eligibility as a college athlete because I was not eating properly. No athlete should lose playing time because of a lack of nutrition information.

Thanks for letting me tell my story, but I am writing now because I want to help you! You already spend hours training and practicing to perfect your craft. Equipping yourself with the best equipment, coaches, and trainers is what every other player is doing. To gain the competitive edge, you need the ultimate tool – you! Proper nutrition allows you to be improved, and you can’t just go buy that in a store.

What you eat is critical, you can greatly improve your on field performance by eating the right combinations of foods at the right times. I will walk you through the steps but let’s learn the signs of bad nutrition habits.
How Food Can Give You an Unfair Advantage

Is your diet affecting your performance?

You can see poor nutrition! There are many signs that you are not fueling your body properly and you need to change your eating habits immediately to reach your goals! Here is what you need to look for:

- Acne
- Brittle nails
- Thin, dull hair, slow hair growth
- Underweight or overweight
- Feel fatigued most of the day
- Poor sleeping patterns – Sleep too much, trouble falling asleep, wake up frequently throughout the night
- Frequent muscle soreness or poor muscle endurance – Feel sore before finishing a workout or competition, recovery is more than 24 hours
- Trouble focusing – ADD, below average grades, easily frustrated, difficulty controlling emotions
- Sugar cravings
- Physical illness – headaches, stomach issues
- Dark yellow urine
- Feel hungry most of the day – frequent snacking

Are you eating to make allow your body to perform at its peak? Learn more by visiting [HERE](http://www.coachataclick.com/nutrition-coaching.html).

How to Measure Progress

You may not feel relief from pain like I did when I learned how to eat properly. Weight scales only give part of the story when you are measuring progress in your health and nutrition. Obvious signs to pay attention to would be improvements in the above list. How you look and feel cannot be measured. Typical ways to gauge nutrition would be:

- Check Body Fat Percentage (Softball players should be between 16-22%)
- How Cloths are Fitting
- Energy Levels
- Mental Clarity and Alertness

***A nutrition coach can help here. (If link does not work, copy and paste this into your browser: http://www.coachataclick.com/nutrition-coaching.html) Routine sessions with a nutrition coach, just like a hitting or pitching coach, can eliminate bad nutrition habits.***
How to Hydrate

First things first: hydration. Hydration is fairly straight forward but commercial sports drinks confuse the average athlete about how to hydrate which can be dangerous. The bottom line is nothing can replace your bodies need for water. Athletes need to consume 100 ounces of water daily and more on days of competition. Following these four simple rules can prevent dehydration.

Four Rules for Optimal Hydration

1. **1 to 1 Rule** - If you must drink a carbonated or sugar beverage, you must first drink a full glass of water and only drink carbonated or sugar beverages with meals.
2. **Sports Drinks** - Good for replenishing electrolytes post workout, during workouts, and games extending more than two hours.
3. **Juice** - 100% juice is a good option but many juices are not 100% real fruit juice. Read the labels but remember, juice is not better than whole fruit. One orange has twice the amount of fiber and half as much sugar than 100% orange juice.
4. **Avoid Caffeine** - Caffeine will dehydrate your body. Too much caffeine and not enough water can cause severe damage to the body. Energy drinks should be avoided. Caffeine from hot tea is a safe source of caffeine if necessary but be careful not to overload with sugar.

What is Food Made Of?

Next you need to know and understand how your body uses food. What you eat can be broken down into 3 simple categories (macronutrients) of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. I encourage you to acquire as much knowledge as possible about macronutrients but here is a quick run-down of what they are and how they can help (or hurt) your field performance.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates will be important at every meal but selecting the correct types of carbohydrates is where most people fail. Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose in your body to be used as fuel and have an effect on glucose levels. Sources of carbohydrates include:

- Fruits
- Grains
- Vegetables
- Sugar
- Beans

Sugar and over processed grain and bread products are the least beneficial to an athlete. Add fresh fruit, whole grains, vegetables, and beans to your meals as often as possible for optimal performance.
Fats

Your body needs fat to preserve muscles and maintain energy levels. The problem most people face is choosing the right fat sources or consuming too much fat in their diets. I will describe the three different types of fats for you.

**Saturated Fats** - Low energy fats. They do not breakdown easily in the body to provide energy, responsible for clogging arteries and increasing cholesterol, and solid at room temperature. Butter, lard, and animal fats are all solid at room temperature and are typically kept refrigerated.

**Unsaturated Fats** - High energy healthy fats involved in important biological processes. Unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature such as vegetable oil and olive oil, found in many nuts such as almonds and walnuts, and the most commonly found in fish as omega 3 fatty acids. Avocados and olives are other sources of healthy fats commonly added to meals or fish oils supplements can be added to a daily routine. If you crave sugar, you are probably not getting enough healthy fats in your diet.

**Trans Fats** - Extremely unhealthy and very dangerous. These fats are manmade through overheating processes during cooking. Fried foods are the number one source for trans fats but can be found in a variety of processed products. Food companies do not have to list trans fats on labels if they contain less than 0.4 grams. Processed and packaged foods should be avoided to keep trans fats out of your body.

Proteins

Protein is a general term for amino acids and there are 20 primary amino acids your body needs to function properly. Muscle repair and muscle building requires amino acids but humans cannot produce half of the primary amino acids, and is why protein should be consumed at every meal or snack.

Sources of protein can be found in animal meats, fish, beans, cereals, and nuts. Protein powders, such as whey, provide a good mixture of essential amino acids but should not be the primary source of protein. Protein from real food should make up 80% of protein intake each day where the supplements should be used as a secondary source.

***Knowing the correct balance of carbs, protein, and fats is where most nutrition plans fail. A nutrition coach can eliminate mistakes. (If link does not work, copy and paste this into your browser: http://www.coachataclick.com/nutrition-coaching.html) A fool proof nutrition plan from a nutrition coach will provide balanced meal options needed for your particular body type.***
Key to Sustained Energy and Mental Clarity

Here is how food can up your game. Controlling your nutrition boils down to controlling your glucose levels. If you are unfamiliar with this concept, glucose is the primary fuel source used in your body. Everything you eat has an effect on the glucose levels in your body. You want to keep you gas in the tank during all waking hours so you have energy when you need it. All of you bodily process, including breathing, requires energy. Improving your brain and muscle functions is how you gain the unfair advantage on the field. Here is how it works.

- **Mental Performance**
  Your brain runs off of glucose and also uses a secondary fuel called ketones. Ketones are the last resort effort to keep your brain functioning to control heart rate, respiration, and any movement your body needs to survive. Ketones only give your brain enough power to stay alive. Thoughts, focus, and emotions are not needed for survival and suffer the most when your body is low on glucose.

- **Reduced Muscle Tone**
  As athletes, we need muscle to perform powerful movements and to reduce risk of injury. Energy storage in your body is in the form of fat cells. If your body needs extra energy, it forms ketones from the fat. Protein in muscles can also be broken down into ketones to be used as energy when your body is desperate. Your body does not use all the fat then uses muscle, a little of each is lost when glucose levels are low and your body requires energy. The more time your body spends running off of ketones, the more muscle you will lose, making strength training efforts useless.

Learning to control your glucose levels takes time to develop proper eating habits. Here, I will walk you through the steps to maintaining glucose as fuel for your brain and body. Applying these six rules to your daily eating habits is proven to improve athletic performance.

1. Eat breakfast.
2. Always pair proteins and carbohydrates in every meal and snack.
3. Avoid white colored foods.
4. Keep sweets as after meal desserts.
5. Eat a protein paired with a carbohydrate every 2-3 hours.
6. Eat a pregame snack 30-60 minutes before competition. Do not over eat and pick “light” foods that do not make you feel full. A banana is a good option. Postgame snacks need to be consumed 30-60 minutes after to replace energy levels in muscles. Chocolate milk is a great option because of its combination of healthy fat, carbohydrates, and protein.
Here is a very basic schedule for when and what to eat for a student athlete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:30 am</td>
<td>Wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:40 am</td>
<td>Drink water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 am</td>
<td>Finish Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 pm</td>
<td>Pre Workout Snack (Slow Digesting Carb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30 pm</td>
<td>Workout Begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 pm</td>
<td>Workout Ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 pm</td>
<td>Post Workout Snack (Quick Digesting Carb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 pm</td>
<td>Bed Time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***Need help planning exact meals, pregame and postgame snacks, and schedule? Get your custom meal plan here! (If link does not work, copy and paste this into your browser: http://www.coachataclick.com/nutrition-coaching.html)***

**Benefits of Custom Meal Planning**

You now have the basic information you need to make your own meal plan. As important as nutrition is for everyone, not exclusively athletes, most people do not take the time to plan out balanced meals. Using a nutrition coach to generate your very own custom meal plan can save you time by taking out all of the guess work. Here are some of the services a nutrition coach can provide:

- Generate meals balanced in carbs, proteins, and fats.
- Analyze your current diet and identify holes in your nutrition
- Calculate the exact carbs, proteins, and fats your body needs based on your activity levels
- Plan pre and post workout meals for optimal performance and recovery
- Make adjustments as your body composition transforms from the benefits of a balanced diet
- Provide an easy to use grocery list to make shopping a breeze
- Recommend delicious recipes
- Generate customized exercise plan

I encourage every athlete to consult a nutrition coach, such as myself. Although information is available and provided in this eBook, mistakes can be avoided. Elevate your game with proper nutrition! Thank you for letting me help, here is to your success!

For more information on fitness, nutrition, and skills for softball players, please visit www.coachataclick.com.
Appendix A. One Day Tournament Meal Plan for a Softball Player

This plan was designed for a 15 year old softball player standing 5’4” and weighing in at 135 pounds. Get your custom meal plan [HERE](https://www.coachataclick.com).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Meal</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00-6:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>Oatmeal, Blue Berries, Hard-boiled Egg, Wheat Toast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Warm Up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:15</td>
<td>Game 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30</td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Almonds, Cheese Slice, Banana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:15</td>
<td>Game 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15</td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Apple, Granola Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:45</td>
<td>Game 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00-4:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Turkey Sandwich (Whole Wheat Bread, Tomato, Cheese, Mayo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raw Carrots, Sodium Whole Wheat Crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00-6:15</td>
<td>Game 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30-7:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Roast Beef Sandwich (Whole Wheat Bread and Cheese)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raw Carrots, Whole Wheat Crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00-9:15</td>
<td>Game 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>Apple, Cheese, Granola Bar, Chocolate Milk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = 16.9 oz bottle of water (or filtered water)  
= 20 oz Sports Drink