



Build Strength Through a Healthy Diet

Anchoring your plate with protein is the first step in planning a nutrient-dense meal with strength in mind. The next step is to pair that protein with a variety of fruits and vegetables.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest that ½ of your plate¹ should be filled with nutrient-dense produce, which provide:

CARBOHYDRATES: As the preferred fuel source for all cells in the body, carbohydrates provide the energy to think as well as sustain exercise, practices and competition.

FIBER: Adequate dietary fiber promotes healthy blood cholesterol levels, feelings of fullness at mealtime, regular bowel movements and the growth of “good” bacteria in the gut.

VITAMINS/MINERALS: These micronutrients are essential in their support of growth, development, healthy metabolism and optimal immune function.

ANTIOXIDANTS: These compounds in foods help protect body cells and reduce the oxidative damage and inflammation in muscle tissue that occur during strenuous exercise.

A healthy dietary pattern that includes a combination of lean proteins, like lean beef, and fiber-rich fruits and vegetables is one that promotes overall strength through disease prevention. Research shows that diets rich in fruits and vegetables are associated with a reduced risk of developing the most common (and deadly) chronic diseases – heart disease, cancer and diabetes. This highlights the importance of introducing healthy dietary patterns early on. The foods that kids learn to enjoy when they are young impacts the types of foods they choose later in life – there’s no time like the present to encourage your growing athlete to enjoy meals and snacks with a variety of fruits and vegetables paired with lean proteins.

FUN FACT: Dietary patterns that emphasize fruits and vegetables are known to promote cardiovascular health; however, the primary source of protein in these dietary patterns can vary. You can feel good about including beef in your heart-healthy diet, since there are over 20 scientific studies that demonstrate how it fits into a heart-healthy lifestyle⁷. The Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet study used lean beef as the primary protein source in a DASH-style eating pattern⁸, while another clinical trial included lean beef as a protein source in a Mediterranean-style eating pattern⁹. Both studies demonstrated that including lean beef in a dietary pattern that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy were able to reduce heart disease risk factors^{8,9}.

Have a kid that isn’t crazy about fruits and veggies? Try these tried-and-true, easy strategies:

- **Blend ‘em up:** Blend a variety of frozen fruits with some Greek yogurt and 100% fruit juice; throw in a handful of spinach or kale for good measure. You can get creative with flavorings too; a little cinnamon goes well in smoothies made with apples, pears, peaches, or canned pumpkin.
- **Add ‘em in:** Try adding vegetables to foods your athlete already likes:
 - Top beef burgers with grilled pineapple, mango salsa, bell peppers or shredded carrot slaw
 - Add garlic hummus or guacamole to your Roast Beef sandwich instead of mayo
 - Decorate your pizza with toppings like broccoli, bell peppers, onions, and/or diced tomato
- **Grate ‘em up:** Use a box grater to add small, shredded pieces of zucchini, yellow squash, onions, cabbage (whatever you have leftover in your produce drawer) to beef soups/ stews or to your favorite jarred pasta sauce with Ground Beef crumbles – or even to your meatballs or meatloaf.

With a plate anchored with lean beef and paired with a variety of fruits and vegetables, you’re well on your way to a nutrient-dense, strength-promoting meal!



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For more information on Beef as a source of strength, scan this code.



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