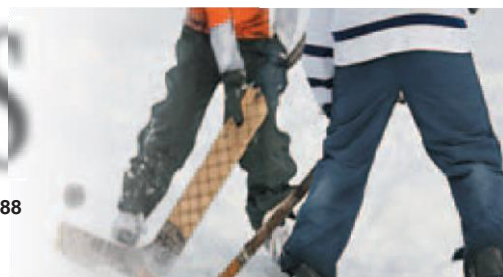


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Goal-setting will help you meet your nutritional targets



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Training Matters



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As a sport dietitian with the Alberta Sport Development Centre, I have the opportunity to work with young athletes 12 to 18 years old. When I meet with them individually the number one nutrition goal they all want to achieve is to eat better.

Now this is a huge goal and it can be a little overwhelming for athletes if we discuss all the different ways they could be eating better. At ASDC we talk to athletes a lot about setting SMART goals, whether it is for their training, for their mental preparation or around their diet and fluid intake. So when athletes tells me their number one goal is to eat better, I work with them to try and break it down into small SMART goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

This is why I am so excited about Nutrition Month this year. The Dietitians of Canada Nutrition Month campaign is based on supporting Canadians to make small changes to their food and eating — one meal at a time. Instead of trying to change everything at once, the focus is on making a small, lasting change and stick with it. This is the same approach we use at ASDC when working with athletes.

First, choose your change. Try tracking what you are eating for a couple days or week. Think about your eating habits. Where can you make a positive, easy change? After tracking their diet intake many athletes can pick out a couple things they would like to work on right away. Here are some ideas that can make a big difference:

- Fill more of your plate with vegetables
- Choose whole grain instead of white bread
- Serve smaller portions
- Enjoy fruit for snacks instead of sweet or salty treats
- Drink water in place of sugary beverages, like pop

Second, set yourself up for success. To make small changes stick, set achievable, SMART goals. Set one to three small goals at a time. Too many goals at once can be challenging.

Be specific: What are you changing? How will you do this? For example “I would like to eat more vegetables. I will do this by packing raw veggies such as carrots, pepper strips, cucumbers, broccoli or a salad in my lunch, or heating up leftovers with vegetables if I am at home.”

Make your goal measurable. For example “I will eat a vegetable at lunch every day” rather than “I will eat more vegetables.”

Set small action-oriented goals. Change a small eating behaviour. “I will focus on increasing my vegetable intake at lunch time” rather than “I will eat better.”

Be realistic. Choose a goal you can achieve. “I eat lunch every day already so I think it would be easy for me to make sure I include a vegetable with it. I have vegetables at home and enjoy eating them.”

Attach a time frame. Give yourself a month to achieve your goal, for example.

Third, plan how you’ll manage healthy eating roadblocks before they happen! Setbacks on a journey to healthier habits are a normal part of making changes. Knowing what some of your challenges are can help you be ready to deal with them.

When I work with athletes we always identify what might get in their way of the healthy eating goals they set. We spend time brainstorming solutions to get around roadblocks. I call them “what if” questions. Having some backup plans or strategies in place will help you navigate challenges as they come up. A slip in healthy eating habits is a learning opportunity. When it happens, review your plan, adjust as needed and get back on track.

Lastly, track your progress. Post your healthy eating goal in the kitchen to keep healthy eating top of mind. Monitor your goals with a food diary, a calendar or an app so you can stay on track. Share your goals with others. Enlist your family and friends to support, not sabotage, your new habits.

Try these three great apps from Dietitians of Canada (dietitians.ca/gettheapps) to support your healthy eating goals:

- Cookspiration: Dietitian-approved recipes to suit your mood and schedule
- eaTipster: Serves up a nutrition tip every day. Each tip is fortified with details backed by evidence. Use the auto-share feature to serve up tips on Facebook, Twitter and email
- eaTracker: Enter foods and activities on the go, set goals to change eating and activity habits and get feedback on progress

Adapted from The Dietitians of Canada’s Nutrition Month Campaign Materials. Find more information about Nutrition Month at nutritionmonth2016.ca.

