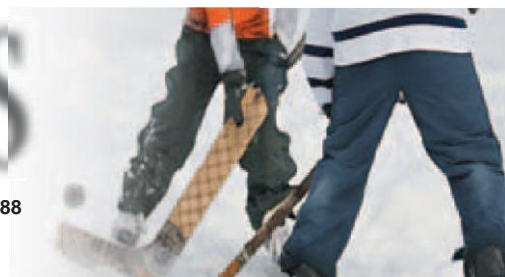


# SPORTS

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## Ten ways to add colour to your diet



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Training Matters



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Many athletes often struggle to eat enough vegetables and fruit in their diet. But it is so important for them to ensure they are eating them! Vegetables and fruits are packed with antioxidants that help repair cell damage that can occur during training. They also contain vitamins, minerals, fibre and phytochemicals that can boost the athlete's immune system. Most important, vegetables and fruit taste great and can be an easy grab and go energy source for athletes.

Here are 10 ways athletes can eat more vegetables and fruit.

1. Plan and prep. Athletes are busy and when they are hungry they are not going to take the time to wash and chop vegetables or cut up fruit. They want food now! Make it easy to include vegetables and fruit in your diet by prepping them as soon as you bring them home from the grocery store. Wash and cut up vegetables such as carrots, broccoli, cauliflower or peppers and store them in the fridge. That way they are ready to eat raw as a snack, to add to a sauce or stir-fry or to steam and eat with meals. Wash and spin lettuce and store in a sealed plastic bag. Use the lettuce to make a quick salad or add to a wrap or sandwich. Cut up a melon, wash berries or peel an orange and package into smaller containers to take and go.
2. Breakfast boost. Cut up a banana to add to your cereal or on top of peanut butter toast. Stir in frozen blueberries to oatmeal. Add peppers, mushrooms and tomatoes to scrambled eggs or omelettes.
3. Snack attack. Remember all that prep you did in tip one? Grab your cut up raw veggies with hummus or your container of fruit with yogurt for a quick and easy snack. Or better yet choose a fruit that only requires a quick wash such as an apple, nectarine or pear for a portable snack.
4. Recovery smoothie. After a training session blend up a smoothie made with fresh or frozen fruit or vegetables, yogurt and milk or juice to help refuel and repair muscles. Be adventurous and try new flavor combinations in your smoothie such as cooked sweet potato and blueberries or banana and canned pumpkin with a dash of nutmeg. Go green by blending spinach, berries and avocado with greek yogurt. Surprise your taste buds!
5. Have dessert. Some of my favorite desserts are fruit-based. Baked apples with brown sugar and cinnamon, apple or strawberry rhubarb crisp, and fresh strawberries or raspberries with a little cream make my mouth water just thinking about them.
6. Barbecue or roast it. Pineapples, mangos, peppers, onions and asparagus taste amazing off the grill. Use skewers or a barbecue basket to grill them to perfection. Try roasting brussel sprouts, sweet potatoes, cauliflower and carrots in the oven for a deep and delicious flavor. Toss with olive oil and season with garlic, your favorite herbs or pepper and roast at 400 degrees until tender.
7. Eat a salad. Have a dark green leafy salad with lunch or supper. Try spinach, arugula, romaine, or mixed greens. Add nuts and seeds, or cut up strawberries or apples for an extra crunch. Use a canola or olive oil vinaigrette dressing to top it off.
8. Buy frozen. We live in Alberta, and when vegetables and fruit are out of season buying frozen is a good option. Frozen produce is picked and frozen while it is still fresh which and maintains a high quality of nutrients. It is very easy to add frozen vegetables to dishes, or throw in the microwave to cook in minutes.
9. Bake it. Shred carrot or zucchini to add great flavor and moisture to your muffin or cake recipe. Add dried fruit such as apricots, dates and raisins when baking oatmeal cookies. Substitute some of the oil in baking recipes by using mashed bananas or applesauce.
10. Pick it, grow it or visit a farmers market. Visit a U-pick farm to pick your own fruits such as strawberries or blueberries. Grow your own produce in your backyard, or plant a plot at a community garden. Even in a small space you can grow fresh lettuce, tomatoes, and herbs in containers on your front step or back deck. Head out to a farmers market and support your community by buying fresh local produce. Try something new or pick up your favourites.

