soccer world. However, eating well and staying active during the offseason will help athletes to return to play with more strength and endurance, making the transition to the preseason much easier. The goals of offseason nutrition are:

- Compensate for the differences in lifestyle and training during the offseason by adjusting nutrient intake.
- Recognize that changes in body fat and weight may occur and be aware of appropriate changes.
- Create a balance between training volume and nutrient intake.

Nutrition is an important piece of the puzzle often overlooked by young soccer players. In addition to making poor food choices, both male and female soccer players often under-fuel or over-fuel themselves. Under-fueled soccer players feel lethargic, have decreased reaction time and speed, and lose muscle and fat. Poor nutrition choices in combination with a low-energy intake can also put a female soccer player at risk of iron deficiency. Soccer players who over-fuel may feel sluggish, have decreased flexibility and speed, and gain more fat than muscle.

TOP 10 NUTRITION RULES FOR FUELING SOCCER PLAYERS

1. Eat minimally processed foods. Limit foods with added sugar, trans fats and saturated fat.

2. Eat a rainbow. Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables.

3. Choose lean proteins. Have lean protein with each meal.

4. Choose healthy fats. Include healthy fats such as olive oil, flaxseed, fish, avocados, nuts and seeds.

5. Choose Whole-Grain Carbohydrates. Whole grains are rich in fiber and nutrients that fuel your body.

6. Eat breakfast every day. "Break the fast" and kick-start your metabolism with protein, carbohydrates and fluids.

7. Fuel for your training. Don't skip meals.

8. Stay hydrated. Dehydration equals decreased performance! Women should drink approximately 2.7 liters of fluid a day, and men should drink approximately 3.7 liters of fluid and/or sports drink a day.

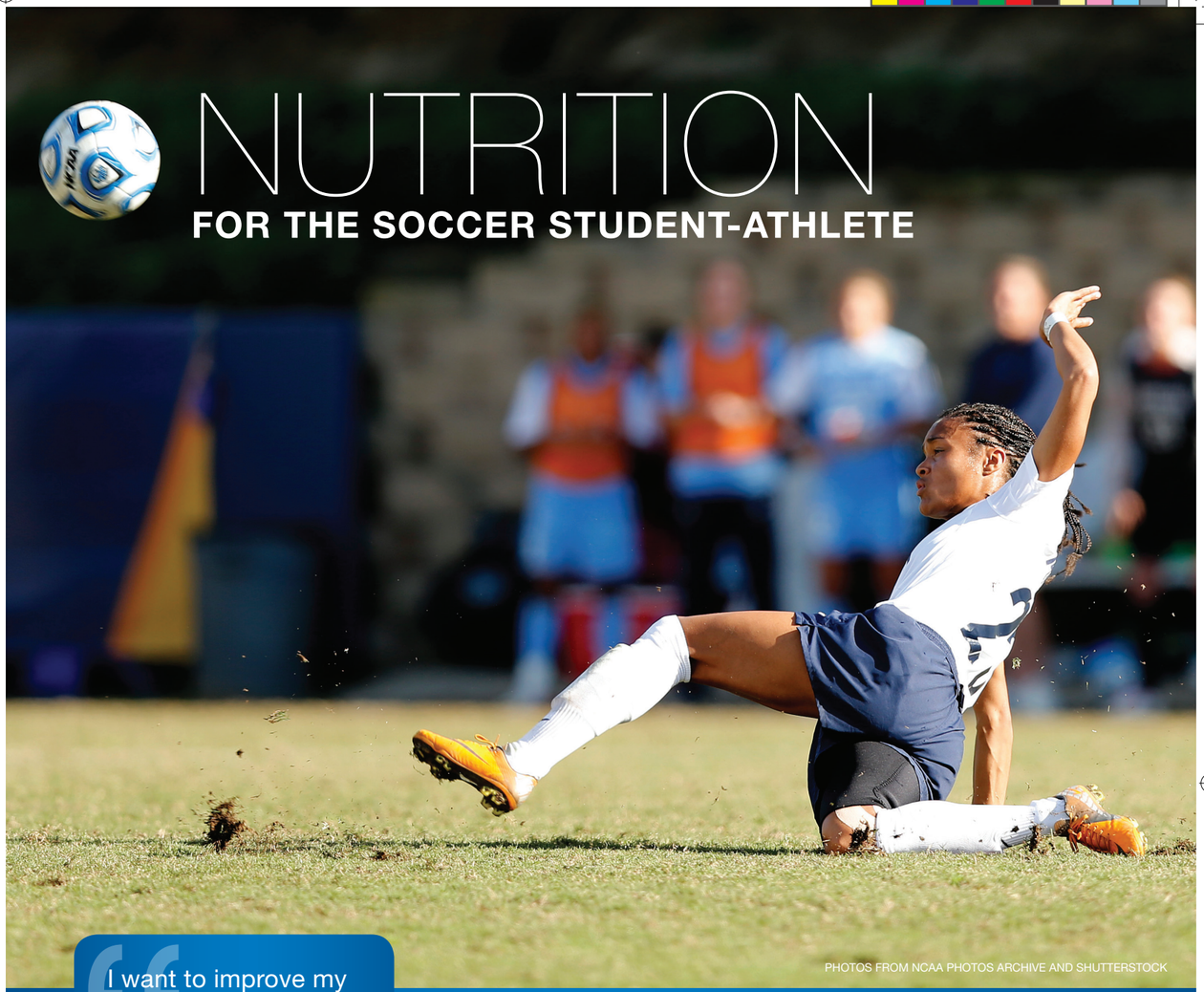
9. Recover. Have a recovery drink with a 4-1 ratio of carbohydrate to protein within 30 minutes of exercise. Eat a balanced meal within two hours.

10. Sleep. Get six to eight hours every night to ensure proper recovery.

Written by SCAN/CPSDA registered dietitians (RDs). For advice on customizing an eating plan to meet your nutrition goals, consult an RD who specializes in sports, particularly a board-certified specialist in sports dietetics (CSSD). Find a qualified RD at www.scandpg.org or www.sportsRD.org.

NUTRITION

FOR THE SOCCER STUDENT-ATHLETE



PHOTOS FROM NCAA PHOTOS ARCHIVE AND SHUTTERSTOCK

"I want to improve my speed and endurance so I can get more playing time. My friends told me that it would be healthier for my body if I avoid gluten and dairy, but now I don't know what to eat!"

Student-athletes hear many misconceptions about nutrition and performance. Soccer is a physically demanding sport that requires strength, speed, agility and endurance. Unlike many team sports, soccer players sometimes play the entire 45 minutes of each half without a substitution. During this time, the athlete is continuously moving, running and sprinting. Without proper fuel, soccer players will not be able to maintain a high level of performance.

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FUELING THE SOCCER STUDENT-ATHLETE

"I don't have time to eat" and "I didn't know what to eat, so I just didn't eat," are common excuses among student-athletes when they first arrive at college.

Eating breakfast within an hour of waking up is essential for energy balance, recovery and weight maintenance.

To properly fuel the body, a student-athlete's day should focus on six fueling times:

- **Snack before morning training:** Slice of wheat bread and peanut butter.
- **Recovery drink post-workout:** Low-fat chocolate milk and banana.
- **Breakfast:** Two scrambled eggs; ¾ cup oatmeal with cinnamon, berries and walnuts; and Greek yogurt with granola.
- **Lunch:** Deli meat sandwich on wheat bread, pretzels, fruit and yogurt and 20-ounce sports drink.
- **Pre-practice snack:** Trail mix, banana and sports drink.
- **Dinner:** Lean protein, nutrient-dense carbohydrate (whole grains, vegetables and fruits) and low-fat dairy.

Hydration is another vital aspect of nutrition that soccer players must pay attention to. The best way to make sure you stay properly hydrated is to practice how you play. Remember to drink water and a sports drink before, during and after practice so you will train your body to do the same for competitions.

PRESEASON PHASE

Preseason is the time when "champions are made." At the collegiate level, training from January to May can be considered preseason. This is when you might make changes in your nutrition plans to gain muscle, lose fat and prepare your body for the upcoming season. Strength training is usually heavier during this phase. During this phase, it is important to choose nutrient-dense foods and avoid mindless snacking.

Gaining Muscle and Losing Fat During the Preseason

- Focus on recovery nutrition within 30 minutes of each strength and conditioning session.
- Avoid excess calories from alcohol, sugary juices and processed snacks.
- Eat for your activity. On light days, decrease snacks and portions. On heavy training days, choose nutrient-dense snacks (nuts, trail mix, 2 percent milk string cheese, peanut butter and fruit) and include carbohydrate and protein with each meal.
- Quench your thirst! Adults often mistake thirst for hunger, so drink water throughout the day.
- Include lean protein with each meal and snack: chicken, turkey, pork or beef tenderloin, fish, canned tuna, edamame, deli meats, hummus, peanut butter, nuts and seeds.
- Choose complex carbohydrate more often: sweet potatoes, brown rice, whole wheat breads, whole wheat pasta, and quinoa.
- Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Choose healthy fats such as olive oil, flaxseed, avocados, seeds, nuts and nut butters.

HYDRATION FOR SOCCER STUDENT-ATHLETES

2-3 hours before exercise: Drink 17 to 20 ounces of water or sports drink.

10-20 minutes before exercise: Drink 7 to 10 ounces of water or sports drink.

During exercise: Drink 3 to 6 ounces of sports drink every 20 minutes.

Post-exercise: Drink 24 ounces of water or sports drink for every pound lost, and within two hours drink enough to replace any weight lost from exercise.

COMPETITION PHASE

During the regular season, soccer players must be able to recover quickly and fuel their bodies properly. Typical games take place on Friday nights and early Sunday afternoons. This is a short turnaround period for your body to recover. Food choices should be used to help aid in recovery and replenishing lost glycogen stores.

Top 10 Anti-Inflammatory Foods for Soccer Student-Athletes

1. Salmon
2. Walnuts, almonds and other nuts
3. Beets
4. Berries
5. Dark leafy greens
6. Whole grains
7. Olive oil and flaxseed oil
8. Tart cherries
9. Soy beans
10. Low-fat dairy

Competition Weekend Meals

Friday's pre-match meal should be eaten three to four hours before the match and consist of high carbohydrate, moderate protein and moderate fat. This could be a spinach salad, dinner rolls, beef tenderloin, chicken pesto pasta, roasted potatoes, steamed broccoli, fresh fruit, sports drink and low-fat milk.

Friday's post-match recovery meal should provide soccer athletes with lean protein, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. An example might be a burrito with chicken, black beans, avocado, vegetables, shredded cheese, sports drink and water.

Saturdays are recovery days. Take advantage of this day and don't use it to sleep and stay still all day. It's important to eat regular meals, drink fluids and snack to prepare for the game Sunday.

Sunday mornings can determine whether your team wins or loses. Be sure to eat an appropriate breakfast three to four hours before the match. This meal could include oatmeal with fruit and nuts, egg omelet with vegetables and ham, fruit and yogurt, orange juice and sports drink. Because you will not eat again until after the game, you should consume some type of snack on the way to the match, such as a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, smoothie, granola, dry cereal, granola bar and plenty of sports drink for hydration.

After the match Sunday would be the time to relax and treat yourself to something you simply enjoy eating.

CHAMPIONSHIP/ POSTSEASON PHASE

The postseason — the period from November and December to early February — includes the holiday seasons, which can be tricky for athletes. One bad meal won't ruin the benefits derived from months of training, but eating poorly throughout this time can make the preseason much more difficult. Eating poorly and overeating can change your preseason goals from gaining muscle and improving technique to getting back in shape and losing fat.

Holiday Meal Tips for Soccer Student-Athletes

- Watch what you drink! Juices, sodas, alcoholic beverages and eggnog can really add up in calories.
- Do not starve yourself all day. This promotes overeating later in the day.
- Eat a light snack before going to a holiday party.
- Use a smaller plate to encourage smaller portions.
- Survey the scene. Look at everything before you make your choices.
- Stay active. Play board games, go for a walk or take the soccer ball outside with the family.
- Choose one dessert, not a plateful.
- Still hungry? If you want seconds, choose lean protein and vegetables.
- Make your plate colorful. If you look down and all you see is brown, you're missing those lower-calorie, higher-nutrient foods. Add sweet potatoes, steamed broccoli, cranberries, etc.
- Watch out for the extra stuff. Gravy, butter, syrup, whipped cream and sauces add up.

OFFSEASON PHASE

The offseason is the period from December and January to May, June or July, when soccer athletes are on their own. It is tempting to use this time to fully relax and disconnect from the