



BASEBALL & SOFTBALL

FUEL THE ATHLETE

The 2026–27 nutrition guide for every USA Prime player, 7U through 18U — and for the parents packing the cooler.

PLAYERS · PARENTS · COACHES

START HERE

FOOD IS EQUIPMENT

You would not send a player to a showcase with a cracked bat or a glove that does not fit. Food works the same way. It is the equipment that decides how hard you throw in the seventh inning, how fast you recover for game three on Sunday, and how well your body handles a growth spurt in the middle of a season.

This guide replaces our previous nutrition handout. The old version was built around one goal — putting on weight — and it was written for a high school hitter. Our organization now runs teams from 7U through 18U, on both the baseball and softball sides, and a nine-year-old and a seventeen-year-old need very different conversations about food. So this edition is built around a different goal: **fuel first, growth second, size third**. Get a player eating enough, often enough, and the strength almost always follows.

WHO THIS IS FOR, AND HOW TO READ IT

Players 7U–12U

Skip the numbers. Read the plate, the timing, and the hydration pages. Your whole job right now is to eat breakfast, eat something every few hours, and keep a water bottle with you.

Players 13U–15U

You are in the years where growth and training collide. Focus on the protein and recovery pages, the sleep section, and the honest talk about under-fueling.

Players 16U–18U

Heavier training, longer travel, recruiting weekends. Read everything, and read the supplement section twice — it affects your eligibility, not just your health.

Parents and coaches: the tournament, grocery, and warning-sign pages at the back are the ones you will use most. Everything in here is general education for healthy athletes. It does not replace advice from your family doctor or a registered dietitian, and any player with a medical condition, a food allergy, a restricted diet, or a history of disordered eating should have a plan built for them specifically.

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THE PRIME PLATE

Every full meal should have four things on it. Not four perfect things — four things. This is the single habit that carries a player from 7U to college, and it does not require a scale, an app, or a calculator.

Carbs

Two cupped handfuls

Rice, pasta, potatoes, bread, tortillas, oats, cereal, fruit. This is the fuel that runs out first.

Protein

One to two palms

Chicken, beef, turkey, fish, eggs, dairy, beans. This is the repair crew.

Color

One to two fists

Fruit or vegetables — whichever ones you will actually eat, cooked or raw, fresh or frozen.

Fat

One to two thumbs

Olive oil, avocado, nut butter, cheese, nuts. Slows digestion and carries key vitamins.

Use your own hand, not a coach's. That is what makes this work across a 12-year age range: a 7U player's palm is the right amount of chicken for a 7U player, and an 18U pitcher's palm is right for him. As the athlete grows, the portions grow automatically.

Add a fifth thing on hard days

On a day with a practice, a lift, and a game, add a starch at dinner and an extra snack. Appetite is not a reliable signal on heavy training days — hard exercise can blunt hunger for an hour or two afterward, which is exactly when a player needs food. **Eat on the clock, not on the feeling.**

EAT EVERY THREE TO FOUR HOURS

A young athlete's body is running two projects at once: growing and training. Both need a steady stream of fuel. The pattern that works is **three meals plus two or three snacks**, roughly every three to four hours from wake-up to bedtime.

A workable day

WHEN	WHAT IT DOES	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
Breakfast within 1 hour of waking	Ends an overnight fast and sets up the whole day. Breakfast is the meal most young athletes skimp on protein at, and skipping it is the most common fueling mistake we see.	Eggs and toast, oatmeal with milk and peanut butter, yogurt with granola and berries, breakfast burrito.
Mid-morning snack 3–4 hrs later	Bridges to lunch and tops off fuel before a morning workout.	Apple and string cheese, trail mix, granola bar and milk.
Lunch	The middle of the day carries the afternoon practice. A skipped lunch shows up at 6 p.m.	Sandwich or wrap, fruit, milk or water, a handful of pretzels.
Pre- or post-practice snack	Carbs before, carbs plus protein after. Never train on an empty tank.	Banana and crackers before; chocolate milk and a sandwich after.
Dinner	The biggest repair meal of the day.	Protein, a starch, vegetables, something to drink.
Evening snack if hungry	Useful on heavy days or for athletes who are growing fast and struggle to eat enough during the day.	Cereal and milk, yogurt and fruit, toast with peanut butter.

The clock matters more than the menu

Two decent meals eaten on time beat one perfect meal eaten too late.

CARBOHYDRATES ARE NOT THE ENEMY

Carbohydrate is the fuel muscles reach for first during the hard, short efforts that fill a baseball or softball game — the sprint out of the box, the throw from the hole, a pitcher's fifth inning. When it runs low, bat speed, arm speed, and concentration all drop before the athlete feels tired.

Adult athlete guidelines generally land somewhere between 3 and 12 grams of carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight per day, scaled to training load, and youth athletes typically need somewhere in the range of **200 to 500 grams a day** depending on how much they are actually training. Most families never need to count this. What it means practically: carbohydrate should be on the plate at every meal, and there should be more of it on a two-game Saturday than on a rest day Tuesday.

Where it should come from

- **Grains:** rice, pasta, bread, tortillas, oats, cereal, bagels, crackers, pretzels
- **Starchy vegetables:** potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, peas, winter squash
- **Fruit:** bananas, apples, oranges, grapes, berries, applesauce, dried fruit
- **Dairy:** milk and yogurt carry carbohydrate along with protein and calcium
- **Beans and lentils:** carbohydrate and protein in the same package

Fiber-rich choices — whole grains, fruit with the skin on, beans — are the better everyday default, with one exception: **in the hour before a game, go low-fiber and familiar.** A bowl of high-fiber cereal at 6 a.m. is great. A bowl of it fifteen minutes before first pitch is a problem.

PROTEIN: SPREAD IT OUT

Protein rebuilds the tissue that training breaks down and supplies the raw material for growth. Youth and adolescent athletes need more of it than their non-athlete classmates — published recommendations for young athletes generally sit around **1.2 to 1.7 grams per kilogram per day** (roughly 0.55 to 0.8 grams per pound), with some sports nutrition sources going as high as 2.0 g/kg for heavily training teens.

DISTRIBUTION BEATS THE BIG DINNER

The more useful finding for our families is about distribution. Research in young athletes suggests that moderate doses of protein — about **0.25 to 0.35 g/kg per sitting, roughly four to five times a day** — keep the body in a positive building state for the longest stretch. A player who eats almost no protein until dinner and then eats an enormous steak is not getting the same benefit as one who spreads it across breakfast, lunch, a snack, and dinner.

4–5×

protein-containing meals or snacks per day beats one big hit at dinner

Breakfast

is where most young athletes are short on protein — fix this one meal first

2.5 g/kg

is the ceiling past which more protein adds nothing for a growing athlete

Easy protein, roughly by source

Around 20–30 g

- 3–4 oz chicken, beef, turkey, pork
- 3–4 oz fish or shrimp
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 1 cup cottage cheese
- A can of tuna

Around 8–15 g

- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk or chocolate milk
- 2 string cheese sticks
- 2 tbsp peanut butter plus toast
- ½ cup beans or lentils
- A handful of beef or turkey jerky

Plant-forward players

- Beans, lentils, chickpeas
- Tofu, edamame, tempeh
- Soy milk and soy yogurt
- Nuts, seeds, nut butters
- Eat protein at every meal and include a variety across the day

Almost every player who eats regular meals hits these numbers on food alone. **Protein powders and bars are convenience items, not requirements** — see the supplement section before buying anything.

FAT DOES REAL WORK

Fat is the slow-burning fuel, and it is how the body absorbs vitamins A, D, E, and K. Cutting it too low is a common mistake in teenage athletes trying to "eat clean," and it backfires: hormones, bone development, and recovery all suffer. Aim for roughly a quarter to a third of daily intake from fat, weighted toward these:

- Olive oil, canola oil, avocado oil
- Avocado, nuts, seeds, nut butters
- Salmon, tuna, sardines — the omega-3 sources worth working into the week
- Cheese, whole eggs, full-fat dairy for players who need more calories
- Hummus, guacamole, pesto, vinaigrette

The one timing rule: heavy, greasy, or fried food sits in the stomach for hours. Keep it away from the two hours before a game.

EVERYDAY, OFTEN, SOMETIMES

Our old guide had an "eat this / not this" list. We retired it. Telling a ten-year-old that a hot dog is forbidden does not change what is in the concession stand; it just teaches kids to feel guilty about food, which is a real problem in youth sports and one we would rather not create. **There are no banned foods here.** There are foods that do more for a player and foods that do less.

Everyday — the base

- Milk, yogurt, cheese
- Eggs and egg whites
- Chicken, turkey, lean beef, pork
- Fish and seafood
- Beans, lentils, tofu
- Rice, pasta, potatoes, oats
- Whole grain bread, tortillas, bagels
- All fruit, fresh or frozen
- All vegetables
- Nuts, seeds, nut butters
- Water and milk

Often — useful and portable

- Deli meat and jerky
- Granola and cereal bars
- Pretzels, crackers, popcorn
- Tortilla chips and salsa
- Dried fruit and fruit cups
- Chocolate milk after games
- 100% juice
- Sports drinks during long, hot days
- Pouches, applesauce, squeezable yogurt

Sometimes — not the base

- Fried food and fast food
- Nachos, loaded fries, hot dogs
- Candy, cookies, doughnuts, pastries
- Ice cream and milkshakes
- Soda and sweet tea
- Sugary coffee drinks
- Chips as a meal

"Sometimes" means after the last game, on a birthday, at the team dinner. Not three times a Saturday.

HOW WE TALK ABOUT THIS

A note to parents and coaches

Please do not label foods "good" or "bad" in front of players, comment on a young athlete's body, or use food as a reward or punishment for performance. Youth sport is a high-risk environment for disordered eating, and the language adults use around the dugout matters more than any handout.

Talk about what food *does* — energy, strength, recovery — not about what a player should not have.

07 — WATER

HYDRATION IS THE CHEAPEST PERFORMANCE GAIN IN THE GAME

A player who shows up to a July doubleheader already down on fluid will cramp sooner, overheat faster, and lose focus in late innings. Hydration is a 24-hour habit, not something you fix in the parking lot.

The daily baseline

Fluid should be coming in all day — with meals, between innings, at school, in the car. Water is the default. Milk counts. 100% juice counts. Sweat losses vary enormously: younger athletes may lose roughly **11 to 25 ounces an hour**, while teenagers in heat can lose far more, in some cases approaching **90 ounces an hour**.

Around training and games

WINDOW	TARGET	NOTES
4 hours before	16–20 oz	Steady sipping, not chugging. This is the window that actually works.
10–15 min before	8–12 oz	Top off, then use the bathroom before warm-ups.
During, under 60 min	3–8 oz every 15–20 min	Water is enough. Use thirst as the guide — never force a set amount.
During, over 60 min or hot	3–8 oz every 15–20 min	Switch to a sports drink with sodium and carbohydrate. Teens in heat may need considerably more per hour.
After	≈16–24 oz per pound lost	Keep drinking with the post-game meal, not just at the field.

THE BATHROOM CHECK

The simplest tool a player has, and it needs no equipment:

				
Pale straw Good	Light yellow Fine	Yellow Drink more	Dark yellow Behind	Amber or darker Act now

Rule of thumb: if a player is not visiting the bathroom every few hours on a tournament day, they are not drinking enough.

Heat, and the thing nobody talks about

Heat illness is a real risk on a turf complex in July, especially for catchers in full gear and for players in back-to-back games. Watch for **cramping, headache, dizziness, nausea, unusual fatigue, confusion, or a player who stops sweating**. Get them out of the sun, get fluid in them, cool them down, and get medical help if symptoms do not clear fast. Tournament organizers should be building in two or more hours of recovery between same-day games in hot weather.

It is also possible to drink too much

Too much plain water during long hot days dilutes blood sodium and causes its own emergency. Signs include headache, nausea, confusion, and swelling. If a player weighs more after a game than before it, they are overdrinking. On long, hot days, fluid should include sodium — a sports drink, or water plus salty snacks.

GAME DAY, HOUR BY HOUR

Nothing new on game day. Every food in this timeline should be something the player has already eaten before a practice without a problem.

WHEN	WHAT TO DO
3–4 hours before	A normal meal: carbs, protein, some color, low fat, low fiber. Start drinking here. Turkey sandwich and fruit. Chicken and rice. Pasta with a light sauce. Pancakes and eggs for an early game.
60–90 min before	A small carbohydrate snack, easy on the stomach. Skip the heavy fat and the mountain of fiber. Banana. Granola bar. Applesauce pouch. Pretzels. Toast with a thin layer of jam.
10–15 min before	8–12 oz of fluid. Bathroom. Warm up.
During the game	Small sips every 15–20 minutes — between innings is the natural cue. For long games, hot days, or doubleheaders, add a sports drink and a quick carbohydrate. Orange slices, grapes, applesauce pouch, pretzels, a few crackers.
Within 30–60 min after	The recovery window. Carbohydrate to refill fuel, protein to repair, fluid to replace sweat. On a normal one-game day this can simply be the next meal. After a hard game, or if another game is coming, do not wait. Chocolate milk. Yogurt and fruit. A sandwich. Crackers and cheese. A smoothie.
That evening	A full dinner — the real recovery meal — and enough fluid that the next morning starts clear, not behind.

Early games

For a 7 a.m. first pitch, a four-hour-out meal is not realistic. Eat something — even a small one — 60 to 90 minutes before: a bagel with peanut butter, a banana and a yogurt, cereal and milk. **Playing on nothing is worse than playing on a small breakfast.** Then eat properly right after the game.

THE TOURNAMENT DAY PLAYBOOK

A three-game Saturday is the hardest nutrition problem in our sport: ten hours at a complex, unpredictable game times, a concession stand, and heat. The families who handle it well all do the same thing — **they plan it the night before.**

The cooler

- Sandwiches or wraps, made the night before
- Bagels, tortillas, pretzels, crackers
- Fruit: bananas, grapes, orange slices, apple slices, melon
- Applesauce and yogurt pouches
- String cheese, Babybel, cottage cheese cups
- Jerky, deli meat roll-ups, hard-boiled eggs
- Trail mix, nut butter packets, granola bars
- Chocolate milk or shelf-stable milk for after
- Frozen water bottles — they chill the cooler and thaw into cold drinks
- A sports drink or electrolyte mix for the hot, long days
- Hand sanitizer and wipes

Between games, by the clock

- **Under 1 hour:** fluid plus a fast carbohydrate. Fruit, pretzels, a pouch, a few crackers. Nothing heavy.
- **1–2 hours:** a small carb-and-protein snack. Half a sandwich, yogurt and granola, crackers with turkey and cheese.
- **2–3 hours:** a real mini-meal. A full sandwich or wrap, fruit, a drink — finished at least an hour before warm-ups.
- **Over 3 hours:** treat it like a normal meal, then a small snack 60 minutes before the next first pitch.

Every gap, no exceptions

- Drink first, before you eat. Start rehydrating within about 20 minutes of the last out.
- Get out of the sun. Shade, shoes off, sit down.
- Refill the water bottle before you do anything else.

Food safety on a hot day

Perishable food should not sit out more than two hours — and no more than one hour once the temperature is above 90°F. Keep the cooler in the shade, keep it closed, and pack plenty of ice. Nothing ends a tournament faster than a dugout stomach bug.

HOTEL AND ROAD RULES

- **Book with a fridge and a microwave** if you can. It changes the whole weekend.
- **Grocery-store first stop:** milk, yogurt, fruit, bread, deli meat, cereal, peanut butter. Cheaper and faster than three restaurant meals a day.
- **Fast food is fine** — order the grilled option, add a side that is not fried, get water or milk, and eat it at least two hours before playing.
- **Long drive home** after the last game? Eat in the car. That is a recovery meal, not a snack.

10 — REALITY CHECK

SURVIVING THE CONCESSION STAND

Sometimes the cooler runs out and the stand is the only option. Order in this order.

Best bets

- Water
- Grilled chicken sandwich
- Plain hamburger
- Soft pretzel
- Bagel
- Fruit
- Granola bar
- Trail mix
- Chocolate milk
- Sports drink on hot days

Workable

- Hot dog
- Turkey or ham sub
- Cheese pizza slice
- Popcorn
- Crackers
- Sunflower seeds
- Ice cream sandwich after the last out

Save for after the last game

- Nachos with cheese
- Loaded fries
- Fried anything
- Candy bars
- Slushies
- Soda
- Energy drinks — **never, at any hour**

One rule beats all of these: if there is another game today, choose the thing that will not sit in your stomach.

RECOVERY: REFUEL, REPAIR, REHYDRATE

Recovery is not a supplement. It is three things done reasonably promptly after hard work.

Refuel

Carbohydrate to replace what the game burned. On heavy days or when another game is coming within a few hours, aim for a solid carbohydrate hit within the first hour.

Repair

Protein alongside it — roughly 0.3 grams per kilogram of body weight, which for most players is a glass of milk plus a sandwich, or a cup of Greek yogurt.

Rehydrate

Fluid with sodium, especially after a hot day. Keep drinking through the evening rather than trying to catch up all at once.

Chocolate milk has held up as a recovery option for a reason: carbohydrate, protein, fluid, and sodium in something a twelve-year-old will actually drink. It is not magic, but it is convenient and it works.

Sleep is part of nutrition

No eating plan survives chronic short sleep. Short sleep raises appetite for exactly the foods we are trying to keep in the "sometimes" column, slows recovery, and raises injury risk.

AGE	SLEEP PER NIGHT
6–12 years	9–12 hours
13–18 years	8–10 hours

After a night game, a light snack with some carbohydrate and protein before bed helps a player settle and supports overnight repair.

IRON, CALCIUM, VITAMIN D

Three nutrients account for most of the deficiencies found in young athletes, and all three have direct performance and injury consequences.

Iron

Carries oxygen. Low iron shows up as fatigue that does not improve with rest, poor endurance, and heavy legs. Adolescent girls and athletes who eat little red meat are at highest risk.

Food: beef, turkey, chicken, tofu, beans, lentils, spinach, fortified cereal. Pair with vitamin C — citrus, peppers, tomatoes — to absorb more. Teens should be getting several iron-rich foods a day.

Never supplement iron without a blood test and a doctor. Too much is harmful.

Calcium

Athletes build up to about 90% of their lifetime bone mass by age 18. These years are the only chance to build that bank, and stress fractures later trace back to it.

Food: milk, yogurt, cheese, fortified plant milks, fortified orange juice, canned salmon with bones, tofu, leafy greens. Teens should be getting several calcium-rich servings a day.

Vitamin D

Needed to use calcium, and tied to muscle function. This one matters especially for our players: athletes who train indoors or through the winter have shown far higher deficiency rates than outdoor athletes — and a northern off-season is a long indoor stretch.

Food: fortified milk, fortified cereal, salmon, tuna, eggs. If there is concern, ask your doctor about testing before supplementing.

GROWING INTO YOUR FRAME

This is the question we get most from 15U–18U players, so let's be direct about it.

For players under about 13

There is no weight-gain program. There is eating enough, sleeping enough, and training. Puberty does more for size and strength than any diet will, and chasing weight before it arrives mostly produces stress and bad habits. We do not weigh younger players, set body targets for them, or talk about their bodies.

For older teens who have started puberty, are training seriously, and want to add strength, the process is unglamorous and it is mostly about consistency:

- **Lift.** Extra food without a training stimulus adds fat, not the kind of mass a pitcher wants. A structured strength program is the actual driver; food supports it.
- **Never skip meals.** Most players trying to gain are not eating too little at dinner — they are missing breakfast and eating nothing between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.
- **Add, don't replace.** An extra snack or two, and calorie-dense additions to meals you already eat: milk instead of water, peanut butter on the toast, avocado on the sandwich, olive oil on the pasta, granola in the yogurt, an extra scoop of rice.
- **Drink some of your calories** if appetite is the limiting factor. Milk, smoothies with fruit and nut butter, and a glass of milk with meals are the easiest wins.
- **Protein at every meal, not a mountain at one.** Look back at the protein page — spread beats stacked.
- **Sleep.** Growth happens there.
- **Be patient.** Real, useful mass comes on slowly. A rapid jump is usually fat or water, and it usually comes off just as fast.

Before starting any gain or loss plan

Talk to your parents and your physician, and if possible work with a registered dietitian — ideally one credentialed in sports dietetics (CSSD). A plan built around one athlete's growth stage, position, training load, and medical history will beat anything in a handout, and this is a stage of life where getting it wrong has consequences.

WHEN AN ATHLETE ISN'T EATING ENOUGH

Under-fueling is far more common in youth sports than over-eating, and it is more dangerous. When an athlete chronically takes in less energy than training and growth demand, the body starts shutting down the systems it considers optional. Sports medicine calls this **low energy availability**, or relative energy deficiency in sport (RED-S). It affects boys and girls.

Signs worth paying attention to

- Fatigue that does not improve with rest
- Performance sliding despite training harder
- Getting sick often, or injuries that heal slowly
- Stress fractures or repeated bone injuries
- Growth or puberty that seems to stall
- Periods that become irregular, or stop
- Irritability, low mood, trouble concentrating
- Skipping meals, cutting out food groups, anxiety around eating, or exercising specifically to "make up for" food

What to do

- Do not handle it with a stricter diet or a talk about willpower.
- Talk to the athlete's physician. These signs overlap with other medical conditions and deserve a real evaluation.
- Ask for a referral to a registered dietitian, and to a mental health professional if food or body image is causing distress.
- Coaches: bring concerns to the parents privately. Never discuss an athlete's body or eating in front of the team.

and food has started to feel stressful or scary, that is worth telling a parent, a coach, or a doctor. It is a common thing in this sport and there is real help for it.

SUPPLEMENTS, ENERGY DRINKS, AND ELIGIBILITY

USA Prime Baseball & Softball's position is straightforward: **food first, and for athletes under 18, food essentially always**. A young athlete eating regular meals does not need supplements, and pediatric guidance is consistent that nutritional needs at this age are best met by a balanced diet rather than products.

Energy drinks: no

The American Academy of Pediatrics is unambiguous that stimulant-containing energy drinks have no place in the diet of children and adolescents, and the National Federation of State High School Associations advises young athletes not to use them for hydration. They are not sports drinks. **They are not permitted in our dugouts.**

Caffeine

No caffeine for athletes under 12. For ages 12 to 18, guidance caps intake at about 100 mg a day — roughly one cup of coffee. Caffeine as a performance aid is not appropriate for our age groups.

Creatine

The American College of Sports Medicine and the AAP advise against creatine use under age 18, and most product labels say the same. During puberty an athlete is already gaining size and strength rapidly; creatine has not been shown to add anything in this group, and its long-term effects on growing bodies have not been studied.

Protein powders and bars

Not necessary for most players, and not harmful in reasonable amounts. Treat them as convenience food for a player who genuinely cannot get enough from meals. Real food is cheaper and does more.

High school players: this is an eligibility issue

Dietary supplements are not reviewed for safety or accuracy the way medications are, and products have repeatedly been found to contain substances not on the label — including substances banned by the NCAA. A positive test costs eligibility regardless of intent. If a college-bound athlete and their physician decide a supplement is warranted, use only products carrying third-party certification such as NSF Certified for Sport or Informed Sport, and check the current NCAA banned-substance list first.

No coach, trainer, or teammate

should be recommending products to our players.

WHAT A DAY ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

These are illustrations, not prescriptions. Portions scale to the athlete's own hand and appetite.

7U–12U • practice day

Breakfast	Scrambled eggs, two pieces of toast with peanut butter, a glass of milk, half a banana
School snack	Apple slices and crackers
Lunch	Turkey and cheese sandwich, grapes, pretzels, milk
Before practice	Granola bar and water
After practice	Chocolate milk in the car
Dinner	Chicken, rice, broccoli, water
Evening	Yogurt with berries if hungry

13U–15U • doubleheader Saturday

6:30 a.m.	Bagel with peanut butter, banana, glass of milk, 12 oz water
7:45 a.m.	8–12 oz water before warm-ups
Game 1	Sips between innings; orange slices in the dugout
Right after	Sports drink and a yogurt pouch within 20 minutes
Between games	Turkey wrap, grapes, pretzels, water — finished an hour before warm-ups
Game 2	Sports drink and fluid every 15–20 minutes in the heat
After the day	Chocolate milk, then a full dinner: pasta with meat sauce, salad, bread, water

16U–18U • LIFT PLUS PRACTICE

Breakfast	Three eggs, two slices of toast, oatmeal with milk and berries, 16 oz water
Mid-morning	Greek yogurt, granola, handful of almonds
Lunch	Large burrito bowl — rice, beans, chicken, veggies, guacamole — plus fruit and milk
Pre-lift	Banana and a handful of pretzels
Post-lift	Sandwich and chocolate milk within the hour
Dinner	Salmon or steak, two cups of rice or potatoes, vegetables, olive oil, water
Before bed	Cottage cheese or Greek yogurt with fruit

17 — FOR THE CART

THE PRIME GROCERY LIST

Protein	Carbohydrate	Produce	Fats & extras
• Eggs • Milk and Greek yogurt • String cheese, cottage cheese • Chicken, turkey, lean ground beef • Deli turkey and ham • Canned tuna and salmon • Jerky • Beans, lentils, hummus • Tofu or edamame	• Bread, bagels, tortillas, pita • Rice and pasta • Potatoes and sweet potatoes • Oats and whole-grain cereal • Crackers, pretzels, popcorn • Granola bars • Tortilla chips	• Bananas, apples, oranges • Grapes and berries • Frozen fruit for smoothies • Applesauce and fruit cups • Baby carrots, peppers, cucumbers • Salad greens and spinach • Frozen mixed vegetables	• Peanut, almond, or sunflower butter • Nuts and trail mix • Avocados and guacamole cups • Olive oil • Marinara and pesto • Salsa • Herbs, spices, salt-free seasoning blends

Read labels on sauces, dressings, and marinades — that is where a lot of sugar and sodium hides. Salt-free seasoning blends are an easy swap that keeps the flavor.

THE FRIDGE SHEET

EVERY DAY

- Eat breakfast within an hour of waking, with protein in it
- Eat every 3–4 hours: three meals and two or three snacks
- Every meal: carbs, protein, color, a little fat
- Water bottle with you all day; check that your urine is pale
- Eat something before and after every workout
- Sleep 8–10 hours (9–12 if you're under 13)

GAME DAY

- Real meal 3–4 hours out; small carb snack 60–90 minutes out
- 8–12 oz fluid 10–15 minutes before first pitch
- Sips every 15–20 minutes; sports drink once it's long or hot
- Carbs, protein, and fluid within 30–60 minutes of the last out
- Nothing new, nothing fried, nothing heavy before you play

NEVER

- Energy drinks
- Supplements without a parent and a doctor
- Skipping meals to make weight, look a certain way, or save time



Fuel first, growth second, size third.

USA Prime Baseball & Softball · 2026–27

WHERE THIS COMES FROM

This guide was compiled from current pediatric and sports nutrition guidance, including the joint position stand of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine on nutrition and athletic performance; American Academy of Pediatrics guidance on youth hydration, sports and energy drinks, and performance-enhancing supplements; recent peer-reviewed reviews of nutritional recommendations for young and adolescent athletes; and hydration and fueling guidance from the National Athletic Trainers' Association and TrueSport.

- Thomas DT, Erdman KA, Burke LM. Position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2016;116(3):501–528.
- Nutritional Recommendations for the Young Athlete. *Journal of the Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America*, 2024.
- Optimizing Performance Nutrition for Adolescent Athletes: A Review of Dietary Needs, Risks, and Practical Strategies. *Nutrients*, 2025;17(17):2792.
- American Academy of Pediatrics, Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness — climatic heat stress, hydration, sports and energy drinks, and performance-enhancing substances.
- National Athletic Trainers' Association — Healthy Hydration for Young Athletes.
- TrueSport — youth athlete hydration and tournament fueling resources.

A reminder

This is general education for healthy athletes aged 7 to 18. It is not medical or individualized nutrition advice. Athletes with medical conditions, food allergies or intolerances, restricted or specialized diets, diabetes, or any history of disordered eating should work directly with their physician and a registered dietitian. Check with a parent and a physician before starting any supplement or any plan intended to change body weight.



USA Prime Baseball & Softball

Athlete Fueling Guide, 2026–27 season • 7U–18U

Revised edition, replacing the 2025 nutrition handout.

Fuel first, growth second, size third.

General education for healthy athletes. Not medical or individualized nutrition advice.