
Paleo for Athletes

If you are an athlete following a Paleo diet, there are several additional dietary factors that you need to keep in mind to stay healthy and perform well in your chosen sport.

Use the guidelines listed below to help you get started on an appropriate diet, and make changes as needed based on your personal health and performance needs.

General Diet

Exercise regularly

- Multiply current weight in pounds by 12 to 14 to get baseline calorie needs
- Add 100 calories for every 10 minutes of moderate/high intensity activity
- For fat-loss goals, do not exceed greater than 20% calorie deficit

Protein

- Aim for 25 to 35% of calories from protein per day
- Total grams should be 0.8 to 1.4 grams of protein per pound of body weight

Carbohydrates

- Needs depend on type of sport and personal preference
- High-intensity sports benefit from higher carb intake (40 to 50% of calories)
- Endurance sports may benefit from lower carb intake (7 to 20% of calories)
- Majority of athletes will do best between 20 and 50% of calories from carbohydrates

Fat

- Determine protein and carbohydrate needs first. Remainder of calories should come from healthy fats

Athlete examples:

- 5'5", 130-lb. female Crossfit athlete with fat-loss goals: 2,160 calories, 160g protein, 220g carbs, 70g fat
- 6'0", 190-lb. male basketball player with muscle-gain goals: 3,860 calories, 190g protein, 385g carbs, 170g fat
- 5'9", 150-lb. male cyclist on very low-carb/ketogenic diet: 3,150 calories, 150g protein, 75g carbs, 250g fat

Hydration & Electrolytes

- Drink 2 liters of water daily
- Add an extra 500 mL per hour of vigorous activity
- Optional: Drink 16 oz (2 cups) of water for every pound lost during an athletic event or training session (requires weighing pre- and post-event)
- Salt all food liberally, to taste
- Add salt and other electrolytes (potassium, magnesium) to beverages if exercising more than 1 to 2 hours

Recovery

- Watch for symptoms of overtraining syndrome:
 - Depression or anxiety
 - Unintentional weight gain or loss
 - Recurrent injury or illness
 - Digestive distress
 - Muscle/strength loss or poor muscle growth
 - Decreased performance
 - Fatigue/exhaustion
 - Brain fog
- Strategies for avoiding overtraining:
 - Temporarily cut back on activity levels
 - Increase calorie, carbohydrate, and/or protein intake
 - Aim for 8 to 9-plus hours of high quality sleep per night
 - Implement stress reduction techniques like meditation, deep breathing, and yoga
 - Cross-train