

# Losing Weight for Athletes



## Before attempting weight loss consider that:

- Desirable weight loss means fat loss.
- Fat loss is desirable only if it leads to improved athletic performance and maintains good health.
- Many athletes already at their optimal weight believe they are too fat and sacrifice muscle, strength, health, and performance in an attempt to reach an unattainable body weight.
- Excessive calorie reduction can lead to muscle loss and slower metabolism.
- Rapid weight loss by dehydration and/or fluid restriction is water loss and can reduce strength, endurance, and overall athletic performance.

A balanced meal plan and an appropriate training program are the keys to success. If you must lose weight, consult a registered dietitian with expertise in sport. You can contact the dietitian at your [Canadian Sport Centre](#) or someone listed under the [Sport Nutrition Registry](#) on the CAC website. If there is no dietitian with expertise in sport listed in your area, [Dietitians of Canada](#) may list a dietitian near where you live.

## Goals

1. To reduce body fat.
2. To maintain existing muscle mass.
3. To allow for normal growth and recovery.
4. To provide adequate fuel for training and normal metabolic functions but to create a minor caloric deficit.
5. To maintain a healthy intake of nutrients and fluids.
6. To provide a balanced diet that contains familiar and satisfying food.

## Guidelines

1. Allow sufficient time to achieve fat loss goals by planning fat reduction well in advance of any major competitions.
2. Ensure that you eat a high carbohydrate, moderate protein, and fat diet by selecting appropriately from all the food groups. This will provide plenty of fuel for training.
3. Drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Remember that weight loss from dehydration and/or fluid restriction is not fat loss and is dangerous to health and detrimental to performance.

## Emphasize Quality

Keep a food record each day and check to see which foods you might substitute for others.

Here are some suggestions:

CHOOSE	USE SPARINGLY
Foods that have been steamed, boiled, broiled, baked or barbecued.	Foods prepared in fats and oils i.e., fried, deep-fried, sautéed.
Herbs and spices, garlic, lemon juice, vinegar, fruit.	Butter, margarine, gravies, sauces, bacon bits, mayonnaise.
Nutrient dense carbohydrate foods such as: whole grain products, cereals, vegetables, fruit and legumes.	Foods high in fat and/or sugar with few nutrients.
Lower-fat dairy products such as skim or 1% milk, lower-fat yogurt, cottage cheese, frozen yogurt, partly skim milk cheese, etc.	Higher fat dairy products, i.e., butter, cream, ice cream, etc.
Lean well-trimmed meats, fish, skinless poultry, and meat alternatives such as beans, etc.	Fatty cuts of meat, bologna, salami, sausage, bacon, wieners, luncheon meats, etc.
Snacks such as: whole grain muffins, oatmeal cookies, fresh fruit, lower-fat frozen yogurt, hot air popcorn, fig Newton's, rice cakes, vegetables sticks, etc.	Foods low in nutrients such as: candy bars, potato chips, candy, cake, pastries, Danishes, table sugar, syrups, soft drinks, honey, etc.
Nuts, seeds, and oils (such as olive, canola, soy) in small amounts.	

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### Helpful Hints

1. Eat frequent meals and snacks to help control hunger and to avoid over eating later.
2. Have breakfast, even if you get up late.
3. Eat most of your food during the day to fuel your training, rather than at night.
4. If you are hungry near bedtime, snack on nutrient dense foods such as: vegetables, fruit, whole grain cereal, skim milk or lower fat yogurt.
5. Plan your food intake for the day. Prepare and pack appropriate foods rather than relying on cafeterias and fast food outlets.
6. Eat meals slowly, chewing your food thoroughly. Enjoy your food!
7. Learn to eat only to the point of satisfaction. Don't eat until you're stuffed.
8. Drink plenty of water. Don't dehydrate your body to lose weight. Limit juice, pop, and alcohol.
9. Prepare and stick to a shopping list. Don't shop when you are hungry.
10. Stock up on healthy snacks that you can take with you. Aim for at least 3 fruits and 3 vegetables every day, they are a great source of carbohydrates.
11. At restaurants, avoid greasy appies and skip the bread. Most restaurant meals have large portions that pack about 1000 Calories per dish. Choose the roasted chicken, a sandwich, or even a simple burger without the fries.
12. Treat yourself. What's your favourite "cheat" to look forward to: chips or chocolate? Stick to a small amount once or twice a week. You won't gain weight, and you won't get bored with your diet.

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