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ARMENIAN MESROBIAN SCHOOL

MESROBIAN

Basketball Player Diet Plan
for Elite-Level Performance

MESROBIAN BULLDOGS

Mesrobian - Basketball Player Diet Plan for Elite-Level Performance

INTRODUCTION

Basketball is an intermittent, high-intensity sport requiring both physical agility and mental acuity. Energy demands during the basketball season are substantial and may be even higher during off-season training.

Choosing foods that will provide the energy to support competition and training is essential and can also be quite challenging.

Unlike high-level High School or College basketball players who have the means and opportunity to eat a proper diet, smaller- high school players and college athletes have variable access to resources. This handbook will focus on the principles of fuel selection in a variety of situations with the goal of accommodating all players.

Key Findings

The Basic Rules of Basketball Nutrition

- **Eat every 3-5 hours**
- **Protein every meal**
- **Carbs around the practice or gym work**
- **Eat more whole foods**
- **At least four servings of fruits and veggies per day**
- **Don't entirely avoid junk food**

It's best to eat every 3-5 hours because you don't want your body to signalize to your brain that its missing fuel for the rest of the day. You don't want to lose a focus, even if you don't play basketball.

Protein every meal, so you don't lose any muscle. It's best to stick to whole food protein like meat, fish, eggs, milk, low-fat cheese, etc. But if you can't afford it or you just can't eat so much food, there's always Whey Protein Concentrate (I use this one), also a healthy option.

Carbs around the practice or gym work so you have enough energy for workouts, at the same time keeping the caloric balance.

Eat more whole foods like apples, bananas, lettuce, avocado, garlic, lean beef, chicken, shrimp, eggs, seafood, etc.

Fruits and veggies for health. They're full of vitamins and minerals that will keep your immunity in check and keep diseases away. Plus they're very low in calories.

And finally, don't avoid junk food so much if you're not overweight. It's better to eat moderate amounts than to suffer because you can't eat a row of chocolate or a bag of chips.

The Right Approach

The question of top basketball players' nutrition is not very complicated. But approaching it with the established schemes (eat this and don't eat that) isn't very smart. On the contrary, **each player must be treated individually**.

A huge effort and money are invested in sports nutrition research, which just us tells that knowledge and experience are constantly multiplying. Through the years, highly competent experts brought us some general diet guidelines that every basketball player today should know.

I'm not going to go through everything about the diet of a basketball player because then it would be a book, not an article. I'm just going to give you the clear and understandable directions for which way to go and then it's up to you. You'll learn how to:

- **Balance meals**
- **Eat for best performance**
- **How your nutrition should look like around the game/practice**

Also, I wrote to you a few meal plans for you to see what I'm talking about. Read on.

DIET DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BASKETBALL PLAYERS AND REGULAR PEOPLE

While a person who doesn't play basketball needs the energy (calories) only to fuel bodily functions, a basketball player needs more „fuel" for training, games, and, of course, all life functions.

And indeed, the basketball players' meals are the fuel that is poured into the body. Though many athletes, in fact, forget it.

Except for the caloric intake, vitamins and minerals can also be a problem for a basketball player, taking into account that they are spent faster because of the extra stress on the body.

On top of this, a **young growing athlete needs additional calories to grow**. So keep that in mind when you're wondering why you're always hungry.

THE FIRST RULE OF PROPER BASKETBALL NUTRITION

Here's an example. A 16-year-old 150-pound basketball player spends around 2400 calories with normal daily activities. And when he has basketball practice, that consumption grows up to 3200 calories. Let's say this boy is already skinny, and if he loses a few more pounds, he'll look like a skeleton. This boy should then eat more, to not lose weight, right?

So the first rule of a balanced basketball diet means adjusting your calorie intake with its consumption. Otherwise, you'd have weight gain or weight loss. Don't worry, we'll talk about both later.

The second rule is to have different foods over the week. That's how you'll make sure to have a proper balance between protein, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals.

Not all basketball players like the same foods, so the coaches who give the same nutrition plan for every player are very wrong. Different foods for different players will yield much better results.

WHY YOU SHOULD STICK WITH THE SIMPLE STUFF (THE FOODS YOU LIKE)

It's interesting to observe how eating habits are strictly individual and how this can hardly change. What you've learned at an early age or as you saw it in your own home, that's how you'll do it during your lifetime.

If you never cooked fish in your house, the stories about how healthy the fish is, wouldn't mean you a thing! And that's totally fine because almost every food is replaceable.

If you don't want anything to bother you on a game day, it's best to eat the foods you know you like and can handle. Most of the basketball players don't like anything heavy (like sausages) on a game day, but that doesn't have to mean it's the case with you.

The point is that we are all different and that the key is to find the foods you love and work with what you have. It doesn't have to be a perfect diet. It's just important to adopt the habit, and the rest will come.

WHY EATING DIFFERENT FOOD IS IMPORTANT

You should eat different foods simply because each of them brings something, but none of them has it all. Milk brings protein and calcium. The meat provides proteins, vitamin B, iron, and zinc. Grains bring carbs and vitamin B-complex, and fruit and vegetables bring so-called protective vitamins (A and C), precious minerals and protective substances like beta-carotene and bioflavonoids).

When you’re a pro athlete, you sometimes eat the food you don’t like to get the most out of a diet. The top basketball player also has to abandon many things, and unfortunately, the food is one of them. If you skip any of the groups of food mentioned above, you risk lowering your chances for improvement. You don’t want to do that.

THE TRUTH ABOUT JUNK FOOD

When I said that balancing meals requires a certain sacrifice, I was thinking about the so-called snack food or junk food. It makes an unnecessary calorie surplus and represents an unbeatable “weakness” for many.

Various flips, rolls, pizza and other foods from cellophane bags shouldn’t come to mind if you’re a Mesrobian Elite - basketball player. Why? Cause they’re ruining the balance!

Many basketball coaches are desperate because of the secret consumption of such foods. They use the term “snack monster ” which is not far from the truth.

The “snack” should be thought of as a small meal and not like “something to chew in your mouth.” In other words, junk food shouldn’t be a solution for psychological, but nutritional problems.

WHY DO YOU NEED CARBS, PROTEIN AND FAT? HOW MUCH?

CARBOHYDRATES

are the most precious fuel for top athletes because they use less oxygen than proteins and fat. It means you can train more intensively and longer and replenish your fuel source faster. Carbs should make around 40-60% of the total daily calorie intake, which means 3 grams per pound of your weight. For a player weighing 150 pounds, it would be 450g of carbohydrates per day.

It's also important to know that the amount of required carbohydrates goes up to 70% if you have endurance training. In that case, even junk food is okay. You'll be in a calorie deficit, which means you'll have enough room for snacks.

In this food, you'll find the most carbs: **bread, rice, crackers, pasta, cereal, potatoes, corn, sugary sweets, whole fruit, fruit juice, milk, ice cream**.

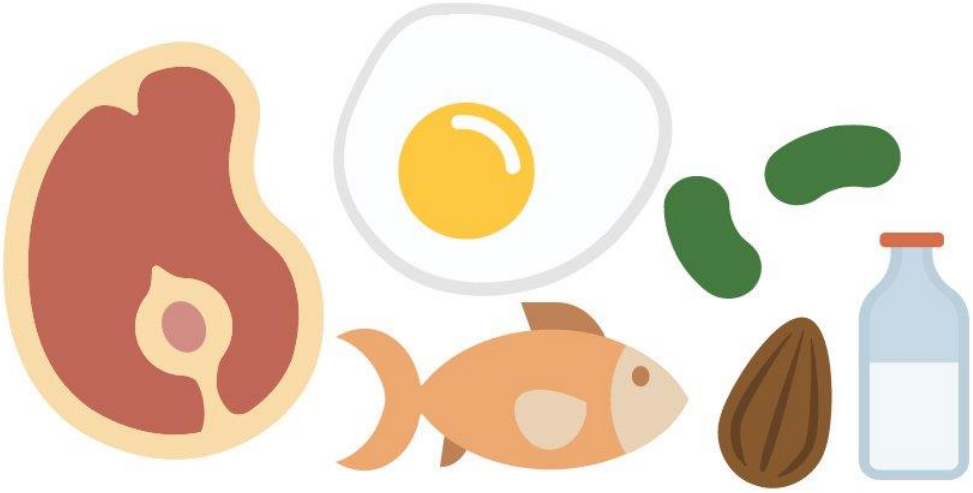
PROTEIN

are not used for energy but regeneration of tissues and organs. Because of the fast metabolism, protein consumption in basketball players should be higher than in regular people.

The average recommendation for younger players in development is 0.8 grams/pound of body weight, which means that an athlete who weighs 150 pounds per day should consume 120g proteins.

How to eat all that protein? Well, if you eat something meaty (but not greasy) 3 times a day and something milky (no cream and fat cheeses) 3 times a day, that would be it. If you feel you don't meet these needs, you can get yourself additional protein – Whey Protein Concentrate.

You'll find the most protein in this food: **seafood, milk, cheese, eggs, yogurt, pork, chicken, lean beef, soy**.



FAT

Fat can be both good and bad. The only right approach means choosing low-fat food every time when you don't eat whole food. Don't go too high with them because fats have more than double the calories per gram than carbs and proteins, which makes them potential unnecessary calories.

The reason why you shouldn't completely cut fat is that the body needs it along with other elements. Fat is responsible for the transfer of some vitamins (A, D, E, K), skin elasticity, protection against infections and ultimately as an important source of energy.

It's a tank of energy that will jump in just when you need it most. As far as daily intake, there's not much difference here between athletes and non-athletes. Keep it around 0.3g/pound, and you'll be fine. The food with mostly healthy fats: **almonds, nuts, seafood, peanuts, olive oil**, etc.

VITAMINS AND MINERALS

It's clear that top athletes need vitamins and minerals, the catalysts of all vital functions, regularly and in sufficient quantities. At least 20% more than in non-athletes, and in some sports even more than that.

One of the essential vitamins are B Vitamins covers the metabolism of carbs (the cycle of energy). If you're not sure if you're missing it, take a look at your diet and see if you're eating enough of grain products – with whole grain. If not, the problem is easily solved through supplementation.

For teeth and bones protection there's Calcium that's mostly contained in dairy products like milk and yogurt, and for blood circulation, there's Vitamin E, contained in almonds.

HYDRATION

As for the water and other fluids, basketball players absolutely need more than non-athletes; at least 8-10 big glasses a day. Reasons? Accelerated metabolism, intense exchange of nutrient and the rapid evacuation of waste materials (toxins).

Everything in the body „swims“ in water, and if there’s not enough of it, all the processes are slowed down. If you play outdoors in summer or a gym without air-conditioner, the required amount of water is doubled and sometimes even tripled.

The official recommendation for a 150-pound basketball player is a gallon or more or water per day when training at least one time per day.

PRE-GAME/PRACTICE MEAL

To avoid hunger during the game and to allow for better physical and psychological readiness. This meal should be consumed at least 2-3 hours before the game to supplement the glycogenic reserves and to raise blood glucose levels.

- Be sure you eat the right type of carbs that won't cause you any problems and get you too bloated
- A good protein meal that's easy on the stomach
- Eat rainbow fruits – orange, grapefruit, bananas, mango, kiwifruit, etc.

FOODS TO INCLUDE:

– *few sources of carbs* (vegetables, fruits, grains) – cooked vegetables, integral bread, fruit juice, etc.

– *milk products* – raw milk, fruit yogurt, milk without lactose, low-fat cheese

– *low-fat meat and fish* – ham, roasted chicken, cooked chicken without skin, tuna, any fish

FOODS TO AVOID:

– *hamburgers, sausages, peanut, fatty cheeses, potato chips, french fries, mayonnaise, croissant.*

Because of the high-fat content, these foods are slowly digesting so it may come to discomfort and other problems during the activity.

One hour before the game, it's best not to put anything in mouth except the cold liquid (every 15 minutes).

Here are three solid options for a carefully balanced meal before the game.

MEAL OPTION 1

- Tuna without oil and integral toast
- Corn flakes with banana slices
- Orange juice
- Raw milk or fruit yogurt.

MEAL OPTION 2

- Chicken sandwich and integral toast
- Vegetarian soup
- Apple juice
- Low-fat yogurt

MEAL OPTION 3

- Baked turkey without skin, integral bread
- Cooked vegetables, green salad
- Grape juice
- Low-fat ice cream

POST-GAME/PRACTICE MEAL

After practice or a game, you already need to start thinking about tomorrow. If you don't enter enough quality food into your body, recovery will be twice longer and leave consequences on your body that could affect the next game. You need to encourage recovery for the next day like you already do with resting.

Right after the practice, the basketball players take recovery substances and, of course, energy (carbs) that was lost during the game or practice. Why? To quickly get back the lost glycogen in the muscles and liver! Upon returning home or going to a restaurant, the player has one more meal with a substantial amount of carbs and proteins (it can also be a sandwich). Then comes a protein shake with the banana or some other fruit, and raw milk if and a little bit of ice-cream for dessert.

- Enough starchy carbs like bread, potatoes, pasta
- Enough micronutrients (vitamins and minerals)
- Protein is essential, and here you can throw in what we said you should avoid in the pre-game meal

DIET ESPECIALLY MATTERS ON THE ROAD

When playing back to back games, players often find themselves tired, without sleep, and when you add lousy nutrition on top of it, you have a mess.

With a balanced diet, they can even sometimes put sleep on a side. With veggies before sleep, they're getting up in the morning like a bird. Proper nutrition allows you to work all night on a project and still be good for a workout the next morning. Not always, but most of the times. The key is proper nutrition and following the guidelines.

The food is the fuel for performance and recovery, but sometimes it's also a pleasure and something to mitigate the pain you feel because of a lost basketball game, breaking up with a girl or something else. Basketball players often lose control with food when they come late to the hotel on the road.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

Not everyone is heading in the same direction. If you're playing basketball just for fun, there's no need for watching your intake so much.

Maybe you're trying to put on some muscle so you won't eat so balanced because you'll need to be in a caloric surplus. Maybe you're trying to lose weight, so you need to eat less. There's plenty of different stories and experiences, but one thing's for sure: basketball players need to take care of their diet and eat accordingly to their weight.

If your goal is top-level basketball then on most days you'll watch out what you eat. Sometimes you'll be sick of it, sometimes you'll eat a ton food just because you can, sometimes you'll fall off the track, but if you manage to do it, it will all be worth it in the long run. It's all up to you.

How to lose weight for basketball?

The most important rule when you're looking to lose weight is to go slowly. Don't cut too many calories at once. It's best to lower your calorie intake every week or two. Why? Cause that way you won't feel the lack of fatigue and your metabolism will keep working like it always does. Every more significant change in intake, whether it's eating too much or too little, is suggesting to the body that something isn't right.

The next thing you should do is to lower the number of carbohydrates and throw in more protein. Then even if you're in a big calorie deficit, you won't lose muscle. But don't go too low with carbs because, as we said, they're the fuel for every physical activity.

You'll eat less, so maybe it will happen that you'll cut some healthy foods you ate before that contain essential vitamins and minerals. To avoid this happening, throw in vegetables in every meal. Vegetables are low in calories, have plenty of micronutrients and actually can be tasteful if you know how to spice it up. I use olive oil and garlic with regular sea salt.

If you're losing 1-2 pounds a week, it means you're doing great. Anything more than that means you're also losing muscle.

How to gain weight for basketball?

The process is the same as losing weight; you'll just increase the number of calories every week with the right food. If you're already eating healthy and respect the guidelines, some of these extra calories can even come from the food we usually call unhealthy – like burgers, fries, pizza, etc. In this case that food positively impacts the metabolism and becomes healthy, because you're gaining muscle, not fat.

So the primary goal is to eat healthy enough while maintaining weight, and then add extra calories while retaining the same activity level. For every additional practice that your coach throws in you should eat an extra meal.

If you're gaining around 1-2 pounds a week, you're doing great. Gaining more than that means you're also gaining fat.

SUPPLEMENTS THAT ACTUALLY WORK

Whey Protein – Legitimate replacement for proteins from real food. An excellent option for those who are short with cash to buy real food or those who need to eat a lot to maintain weight and need some liquid calories. You don't want to lose muscle. I personally use classic Gold Standard (get it on Amazon)

Creatine – Studies have shown that creatine can be a powerful strength supplement, which for basketball player means more comfortable shooting, higher vertical jump, and stronger paint movement. Controlled studies showed that at a dose of 20 grams per day, creatine (aff.link) could improve sports performances of basketball players in only 5-6 days! Also, it will postpone fatigue after short-term stress like sprinting or weightlifting.

Adding creatine, however, can't increase endurance. The long-term effects of creatine monohydrate were only researched in one study, but the experts have no doubt; creatine is safe. It should also be pointed out to research that showed improvement in strength in people with rare musculoskeletal and metabolic disorders.

Fish Oil – If you're lacking fatigue and sometimes can't think straight, there's a high possibility that you lack omega-3 essential fats (Amazon). In that case, fish oil will almost instantly make you feel good, and you'll wonder why you haven't used it before. This often happens when a player doesn't eat enough fish or nuts that are full of it.

Vitamin D – If you don't live in a place where's sunny all day, you probably have Vitamin D deficiency. Fortunately, there's an easy way to correct that. Except with food that contains a significant amount of Vitamin D – sardines, salmon, mackerel, tuna, raw milk – supplementing with Vitamin D is always a good option.

Honorable mentions: Magnesium, Zinc, B Vitamins, Vitamin C.

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