

GROWING CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Positive Strategies for Helping Kids Win at Life and Sports

Is It Mission Impossible to Get Your Athlete to Eat Healthy Foods? Try This Approach

By David Benzel



Your mission, should you choose to accept it, involves coming up with a SIMPLE way to help your teen athlete eat healthier. This message will NOT self-destruct in 5 seconds.

As a parent, that IS your mission—whether or not you accept it. And it might seem to be, everything, but simple.

Between the junk food that always seems to be present, the fast-paced lifestyle that many teens choose, and the conflicting information on what healthy eating REALLY looks like, it can seem like MISSION IMPOSSIBLE.

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One way to bring clarity to this challenge is to understand the definition of **nutrient-dense foods**.

They are real foods—not chemically processed. Generally, very rich in necessary vitamins, minerals, electrolytes, and healthy fats.

Choosing foods that are HIGH in nutrient-density is a similar notion to “getting the most bang for your buck.” It’s all about consuming foods that give you the most amount of health benefits, with the least amount of caloric intake.

With that in mind let’s take a look at 5 nutrient-dense foods, what they offer, and easy ways to incorporate them into your teen’s weekly snacks and meals.

1) Berries—Nature’s Candy

Getting your athlete to eat more berries, is probably not THAT difficult because these colorful fruits satisfy the need for something sweet—and most teens are regularly reaching for sweet.

But don’t underestimate the power of nature’s answer to candy. Thanks to a large dose of phytochemicals called anthocyanins, berries can boost athletic health in these ways:

- [Quicker recovery](#) due to anti-inflammatory properties
- Helps keep blood sugar levels more balanced, so there is no “crashing” during practice
- Improved memory

Besides packing them as a snack, you could try this “fun breakfast,” to start the day off right.

Overnight Oats

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Mix equal parts of Greek yogurt, almond milk, and oats in a clear jar or container of your choice. Set in the fridge overnight.

In the morning, there is no need to cook. Just add fresh berries and honey to taste.

2) Egg Yolk

It's time to "right the wrong" that has been done to the egg.

[Science](#) now shows that eggs are NOT responsible for causing high cholesterol. And taking it one step further, many of the significant health advantages are in the part of the egg that has often been tossed out—the yolk.

Include eggs in your athlete's diet for these reasons:

- Improves brain health thanks to the choline in eggs
- Loaded with high-quality protein, which is essential for endurance and strength
- Full of healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals for proper development and recovery

Hard Boiled on Hand



At the start of each week, make sure you have a dozen hard boiled eggs on hand. With a bit of salt and pepper, they make a filling and healthy snack.

Kids are more likely to choose them if they are readily available.

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3) Raw Garlic

It's not really a secret that garlic has many health benefits—it appears on most of the “superfood” lists out there.

This is because it is chock-full of vitamins B & C. It also boasts high levels of calcium, potassium, copper, manganese, and selenium.

But it is the active ingredient, Allicin— produced when it is minced or crushed—that provides powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits that every athlete needs.

Also, fresh garlic:

- [Promotes](#) heart health needed for intense efforts
- Kills pathogens and bacteria, keeping colds at bay
- Is good for bone health, which adds protection from injury

Protective Cold Remedy



Want to boost your athlete's immune system?

Peel and crush 6-10 garlic cloves and simmer in 2 cups of water for 10 minutes. Strain and then add the water to the juice of one lemon. Add honey, to taste. Give this to your athlete at the start of a cold or when feeling run down.

4) Sprouts

Look past the salad-like quality of alfalfa sprouts because this flowering plant means business when it comes to health benefits.

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A super-high concentration of vitamins and minerals translates into these valuable benefits:

- Reduces inflammation – thanks to high levels of vitamins C and B as well as calcium
- Improves digestion – because of high dietary fiber content
- Protects the heart – thanks to high iron and potassium

Forget the Salad—Go For This Smoothie



Mix these ingredients in a blender until smooth and creamy. Serve for breakfast or as a healthy, power-packed snack.

- 1 ½ cup frozen mango
- 1 cup almond milk (or water)
- ½ cup of alfalfa sprouts
- ½ avocado (optional)
- 1 Tbs. honey or agave
- 1 Tbs. lime juice

5) Dark Chocolate

You probably won't have any trouble convincing your athlete to partake in this treat.

Dark chocolate has high amounts of fiber and an abundant supply of iron, manganese, copper, and magnesium. In addition, it is plentiful in antioxidants which combat the free radicals that can result from intense training.

Additionally, the cocoa in dark chocolate gives you these benefits:

- Lowers risk of heart disease
- Supports brain function
- Reduces blood pressure

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A Square a Day...



Keep chocolate limited to one square a day to receive the benefits without adding too much sugar to your athlete's diet.

Purchase chocolate with at least 70% cocoa for the best benefits.

There is Power in the Foods You Choose

In between the pizzas, late nights studying, french fries, ice cream, and hard-core training sessions, it IS POSSIBLE to deliver the kinds of nutrients that set your athlete up for success.

Look for power foods that are nutrient-dense to make a difference in their nutrition.

Now it's your turn. Are there any clever ways that you use to get your athletes eating better? Share in the comments.

You might just help another parent who is facing—what seems—to be Mission Impossible.

David Benzel is the Founder and Executive Director of [Growing Champions for Life, Inc.](http://www.growingchampionsforlife.com), which provides parents and coaches with practical tools & positive strategies for helping athletes reach their full potential while enjoying the youth sport experience. David is also the author of *"From Chump to Champ - How Individuals Go From Good to Great"* www.growingchampionsforlife.com