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Gaining Weight—Building Muscle

Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutrition
a dietetic practice group of the
eat right. American Dietetic Association

Athlete Scenario

I'm a defensive lineman on my high school football team. My coach said I need to bulk up and gain weight to get more playing time. I workout harder than my teammates yet I still can't put on weight. I have tried muscle building supplements and eating a high protein diet but nothing seems to work. What am I missing?

Nutrition Goals for Building Muscle Mass

- Eat balanced meals rich in carbohydrate and moderate in lean protein and fat to supply your body with the energy and nutrients needed to build lean tissue.
- Include and extra 300-500 calories a day above current calorie needs by adding snacks or increasing your portion sizes.
- Fuel strength training sessions with foods containing carbohydrate and protein to provide energy for muscle contraction, spare protein from use for energy, and supply amino acids for building and repair.
- Eat every 3 to 4 hours to ensure optimal nutrient availability.
- Have your body composition assessed by a professional before weight gain to ensure that the added weight is muscle mass, not body fat.

Snack Ideas to Fuel Muscle Growth

- Flavored milk
- Nut butter (almond, peanut, cashew) and crackers
- Granola or muesli with 2% or whole milk
- Cottage cheese and salsa with tortilla chips
- Trail-mix with dried fruit and nuts
- Meal replacement shakes
- Fruit yogurt or kefir
- Cheese and crackers
- Low-fat granola or sports bars

Written by SCAN registered dietitians (RDs). The key to optimal meal planning for athletes is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing "Find a SCAN Dietitian" at **www.scandpg.org** | **800.249.2875**.

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Tips to Take With You

1. Excess protein will not build new muscle tissue. An appropriate training stimulus plus extra calories are key to muscle growth.
2. Proper timing of meals and snacks fuel recovery from training sessions and promote muscle growth.
3. Consume a snack rich in carbohydrate with 10-20 grams of protein before and immediately after strength training sessions.
4. Set realistic weight gain goals along with a timeline to achieve those goals.

Contact SCAN

Web site: www.scandpg.org
Voice: 800.249.2875