

Bowling Nutrition Begins With the Basics

Let's begin with the basics and review something that is already familiar to most of us. What was formerly known as the USDA's "A Guide to Good Eating", "The Food Wheel" or "The Food Guide Pyramid" is now "My Plate". www.choosemyplate.gov.

While the program has had many titles, the principle is the same - Eat healthy and understand the benefits of good nutrition.

USBC, in an effort to introduce the benefits of good nutrition to bowlers everywhere, would like to share some of the basics and recommended guidelines with our members and coaches.

Grains are any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley or another cereal grain. The two types are whole grains (containing the whole kernel when processed) and refined grains (removing the bran and germ during processing). Choosing "whole grain" cereals, breads & pasta provides a natural source of protein and carbohydrates.

Vegetables are broken into five subgroups, Dark Green, Starchy, Red & Orange, Beans and Peas & Other. Vegetables provide nutrients necessary for the body to function such as Vitamins A & C and potassium. Buy them fresh and include them in some variety at every meal.

Fruit provides numerous health benefits — people who eat more fruit and vegetables as part of an overall healthy diet are likely to reduce the risk for a number of chronic diseases. Fruit provides nutrients vital for health and maintenance of your body. They're also easy to travel with and a good source of nutrition on the go.

Dairy products such as milk, cheese, yogurt and ice cream are considered part of this food group. Foods made from milk contain calcium and promote healthy bones and teeth. Most choices should be fat-free or low-fat. To help keep blood cholesterol levels healthy, limit the amount of these foods you eat.

Protein is meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. Choose a variety of lean protein foods to improve health benefits. Meat and poultry choices should be lean or low-fat as protein can sometimes be high in calories. Protein is rich in Vitamin B & E and iron which are all good building blocks for muscles.

Understanding the basic food groups will help you make meal time decisions easier. Also, remember to balance portions while including variety. Bowling's physical demands are not unlike other sports. Strength and endurance can be added benefits to maximizing performance and utilizing good nutrition will complement any physical conditioning plan.

The major nutritional crisis for most bowlers is extra body weight. Excess body fat is only a hindrance. Not only does it add extra stress to the muscles and bones as you bowl, the stress on your heart is potentially life threatening. Excess body fat also can hinder your bowling technique,

making it more difficult to execute the delivery. Fatigue from carrying the extra weight can reduce your training time and add distractions to your game.

As bowlers, it is challenging to find healthy food options at the bowling center. Although most offer a few items on the menu that are better than others, ie: Soft Pretzel (scrape off some of the salt!); Popcorn (forego the butter!) or grilled chicken. You may also ask the manager of the snack bar to add a few more nutritious items to the menu. Another option is to eat a healthy snack (a piece of fruit, a protein bar, yogurt or carrot sticks) before heading to the center.

The best nutritional advice is to have a healthy, well balanced diet. It's up to you to choose wisely in order to provide your body with the fuel it needs to help you to perform at your best.

