

PERFORMANCE PLAYBOOK



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Grand-Slam Nutrition

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Players at all levels of baseball need to excel at throwing, hitting, running, and catching. That calls for a sound training program. Today, baseball coaches and athletic trainers may face a new training concern – overweight players. Lugging around excess fat baggage can reduce a player's speed and agility, diminish endurance, and make hot weather more uncomfortable. How can overweight players improve?

Reaching Appropriate Playing Weight

1. Base weight loss goals on the percent of body fat, measured by an experienced professional. Body mass index tables, suggested for the general population, are not appropriate for athletes who routinely carry heavier weights because of greater muscle mass. Appropriate fat percentages for baseball players are:

POSITION	RECOMMENDED PERCENT BODY FAT
Pitchers and Catchers	Approximately 12%
Infielders/Outfielders	Approximately 10%

If body fat percentage is high, it can be reduced. The athlete needs to consume less energy (calories) from food and expend more energy through additional activity.

2. To consume fewer calories, reduce foods that are high in sugar and/or fat and any alcoholic beverages. Some fat is necessary to provide a feeling of satiety or fullness, which prevents hunger from returning too soon. However, overindulging in sweets, high-fat snack foods (cheese, ice cream, chips, pizza), or beverages containing alcohol can send total calories soaring.
3. Balance eating throughout the day, and avoid oversized portions of any food. Include breakfast and lunch to prevent becoming ravenous at dinner. Visit MyPyramid.gov, and enter your sex, age, and activity level to receive an individualized eating plan.
4. To increase calorie expenditure, do additional walking, running, stair climbing, or cycling. Endurance activities will use some of the calories ingested, rather than storing calories as added fat.

Resistance training is also important to maintain lean muscle tissue.

5. All effective changes take time. Start early in the offseason, and set a weight loss goal of about 1/2 to 1 pound per week. That rate is safe and can usually be maintained until the desired weight and percent body fat are reached.
6. Caution! Players should never dehydrate to lose weight. An athlete who loses just 2% of body weight through dehydration (3 pounds for a 150-pound player), can drop 8% to 10% in performance. All players, including those trying to lose weight, should drink often and on a schedule, to replace sweat losses.

Tips for Preventing Dehydration

- Monitor fluid losses by weighing in and out of practices. Teach athletes to aim to drink enough during practice so that they don't lose or gain weight. During recovery and for every pound of weight lost through sweat, drink 20 to 24 ounces of fluid.
- Remind athletes to check the color of their urine. If it is pale like lemonade, that's a sign of good hydration. If it's dark like apple juice, they need more fluids.
- Favor a sports drink over water, because electrolytes replace the sodium lost in sweat, carbohydrates fuel working muscles, and flavor encourages drinking.

Choose a sports drink containing carbohydrate and adequate electrolytes (check labels for those providing approximately 14 grams of carbohydrate in 8 ounces of fluid) to provide muscles with energy as well as fluid. The carbohydrate and electrolytes in sports drinks provide athletes in stop-and-go sports, like baseball, greater endurance and power over the whole game. Sports drinks also taste good, so players tend to drink more and hydrate better.

