

Nutritionally Speaking - How to elevate your golf game with changes to your eating and nutritional habits

By Scott Laurent

While exercise and conditioning are important components to golf fitness, you should understand that it is a sound nutritional foundation that allows your body to reach and maintain good health and fitness, and without the foundation, would be like running a sports car with the lowest grade octane available. Your gas on and off the course can be high octane powered by your smart nutritional choices and a simple dedication and commitment to educating yourself with some easy to follow ground rules.

Let's take a look at a few key areas that should help jumpstart a healthy start to a new year and help you enjoy a more resilient, sustainable energy and focus while out on the course.

The Art of Reading Food Labels-

A very important step in providing yourself with the best opportunity to eat well-rounded, nutritionally dense foods is to become familiar with the art of reading food labels, which the FDA mandates must be included on the back of most packaged foods we purchase at the supermarket. Though it's not brain surgery, it's certainly intimidating when flipping a box over and having to dissect a page of small print for useful information. The most important things to pay attention to are as follows:

*Calories per servings. This is the single most overlooked item when reading nutritional labels. Make sure and look at the serving size per container and the amount in grams or cup size that you plan on consuming so that you're most accurate with your calorie counting.

*The percent daily value of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium content for that specific food and how it relates to your projected daily values found at the bottom of the nutritional guide. Make sure and approximate your personal calorie projection and modify the values since the ones listed are for 2,000 and 2,500 calorie diets.

*Pay attention to the amount of protein and carbohydrates along with the fat that you are consuming using the daily percent reference and use the New Food Guide Pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) to gain a better understanding of the servings and types of foods you should consume that are most nutrient dense and create a balanced eating plan.

Healthy Food Shopping-

There are two carts in our lives as golfers, both of equal importance. One cart takes you from hole to hole on the golf course. The other cart is the one you push through the isles of the grocery store, and it has more impact on your health and golf fitness than you might think.

Once you have a basic idea of nutritional values and balanced eating patterns, the next step is to understand and implement an efficient way of grocery shopping to complete the whole package. The goal is to mirror your intended nutritional diet following the recommended servings of each food group while paying close attention to the levels of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.

Remember to be conscious of choosing nutrient dense foods and not empty calorie foods, which contain a high amount of calories with little or no nutritional value. Examples of these types of empty calorie foods are sodas, sweetened drinks, cakes, cookies, etc. Be careful to not buy into the hype of fat free or low calorie labels without looking closer at the ingredient and nutritional label first. Many people make the mistake of choosing these foods as insurance in lowering their calorie and fat intake yet not realizing that they are usually empty calorie foods loaded with additional sweeteners, preservatives, etc that just might not be the best for you.

The following is a list of tips to use while shopping:

- Unless you are a vegetarian, your protein and meat choices should come mostly from lean meats such as fish and poultry.
- Grain and Cereal Choices should consist of “Whole Grains” and not refined flours.
- Dairy products should include low fat milk, yogurts and cheese, substituting with soy products if you are lactose intolerant.
- Choose a wide variety of colors when picking your fruits and vegetables. This insures that you are getting a great mix of antioxidants and disease fighting photo chemicals.
- When choosing fruit drinks look for labels that say “100% Fruit Juice”
- Limit the amount of high calorie condiments that you choose to flavor salads, sandwiches, by substituting with low calorie dressings.
- Try not to load up with high calorie deserts and treats. Choose treats that are individually wrapped into single size portions.

The Commitment

The negative health consequences of not eating a balanced nutritionally sound diet include a long list of health risks including cardiovascular disease, some type of cancers, diabetes, hypertension, and many more. At the very least it directly affects the potential we have of maintaining health and good fitness for many years of continued enjoyment with golfing. Even Tour professionals admit that one of the main performance related problems they suffer from is not properly eating and fueling their body before an event.

The commitment happens when an individual realizes that the benefits of following a good nutritional program outweigh the consequences of the work involved in getting there. We can all agree that it is worth the effort. Now it is time to make a plan of action for attaining it. Make your goals in concrete terms. Write them down and include what behavior (in this case eating more nutritionally), to what extent, and the desired schedule for getting there. Empower yourself with reading as much information as possible on healthy eating and nutrition. Start by taking a look at the governments new

food guide pyramid (www.mypyramid.gov) .Starting sooner than later will no doubt help you achieve a new healthier golf season for 2007.

Sample label for
Macaroni & Cheese

1 **Start Here** →

2 **Check Calories**

3 **Limit these Nutrients**

4 **Get Enough of these Nutrients**

5 **Footnote**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

6

Quick Guide to % DV

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High

© Scott Laurent – scott@readytoexercise.com

Web: www.readytoexercise.com

Written by Scott Laurent

Scott has a BA in Psychology and Sport. He is a certified personal trainer and was a semi-pro athlete. His consulting business, www.readytoexercise.com, helps people who are contemplating, just starting, or having difficulty remaining in an exercise program. He can be reached at scott@readytoexercise.com