PERFORMANCE NUTRITION FOR THE TACTICAL ATHLETE

“No man has the right to be an amateur in the matter of physical training. It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable.” - Socrates
Disclaimer

We are not registered dietitians, but we can arm you with basic knowledge to take ownership over fueling your body for optimal performance.
Outline

- Instill new mentality: fueling vs feeding
- Learn how to build the tactical athlete’s (AKA You!) plate
- Fueling on and off shift
- Caffeine, Supplements, Alcohol
- Provide solutions for simple meal prepping and easy snacks
You are a paid, trained professional whose **strength**, **endurance**, **mental toughness**, **technical skills**, and **tactical proficiency** influence the success of your team....

.......sounds a whole lot like...

**Professional athletes!!**
What is a tactical athlete?

- Tactical athletes are the professionally trained personnel responding to emergencies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tactical Athlete</th>
<th>Typical Athlete</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “Competition” is sometimes life or death</td>
<td>• Competition is Win/Loss</td>
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<td>• “Competition” dates are not certain</td>
<td>• Competition dates are known months sometimes years in advance</td>
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<td>• Somewhat specialized, but must be jack of all trades</td>
<td>• Specialized for their sport</td>
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<td>• Recovery schedule (sleep, fueling, environment) is often times compromised due to demands of the job</td>
<td>• Recovery schedule (sleep, fueling, environment) is often times controllable for optimizing performance</td>
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Feeding versus Fueling

- Feeding is eating with no inherent purpose behind our fuel source

- Fueling is eating with the purpose of maximizing physical and mental performance

- Low grade fuel = low grade performance
Fueling is NOT...

Boring and Rigid

Dry

Tasteless
Fueling IS...

Tasty

 Balanced

Room to indulge *within reason*
Why should fueling matter to me?

As a high performance vehicle, how do you want to run???

Low grade fuel = low grade performance

• Short-term: Improve body composition, helps me through my shift
• Long-term: Build healthy habits now for a long, fulfilling career AND life afterward
• BOTTOM LINE: Lives may depend on your ability to perform.
The Tactical Athlete’s Plate
Components of the Tactical Athlete’s Plate

- Carbohydrates = Energy
- Lean Protein = Recovery and Rebuilding
- Veggies = Vitamins and Minerals
- Fats = Vitamin Absorption, Taste, and Satiety
- Water = Hydration
This template is ideal for tactical athletes looking to maintain their current body composition or lean up.

This template is also a great guide on an easy training day or recovery day (< 30 min cardio, light circuits, easy total body strength training).
This template is ideal for tactical athletes that are fairly active and want to maintain their current body composition or increase their muscle mass at a steady rate.

This template is also a great guide on moderate training days (circuits > 30 min, high intensity intervals, 30m+ of cardio, moderate total body strength training)

The Tactical Athlete’s Plate - Moderate Training
This template is ideal for tactical athletes that are very active and need the additional carbohydrates to restore glycogen stores for the next training session.

This template is also a great guide on hard training days (high intensity circuits > 30 min, >60m cardio, hard total body strength training)
Example Day of Fueling On-Shift (High Call Volume Shift)*
*Amount of food is dependent on the individual, this is simply an example*

**Medic Shift**

- **1000** - Eat snack after equipment check
  - 2 hard boiled eggs, handful of baby carrots, 8 oz water

- **1100-1400**: 2-4 calls (routine)
  - 20-40 oz water
  - Piece of fruit from EMS break room in hospital

- **1400** - Packed lunch from home
  - Grilled chicken breast, quinoa, steamed broccoli
  - 8 oz water

- **1400-1930**: 2-5 calls (1 very rough call)
  - Beef jerky stick from your cooler
  - 20-40 oz of water

- **2000** - Tired, but need to fuel, not just feed
  - Call ahead to Chipotle for bowl with greens, black beans, steak, pico, corn relish, tomatoes, your choice of guac or cheese
  - 8 oz water

- **2100-2300**: 2 calls
  - Optional Dessert: piece of fruit with cottage cheese or Greek yogurt

- **2300-0600**: Sleep, 2-6 calls
  - 6-8oz water every wake up

- **0730** - Breakfast
  - Oatmeal, cottage cheese or Greek yogurt, 8 oz water

- **0800-1000**: 2-3 calls (routine)
  - A couple of clementines
  - 20 oz water
Firefighter Shift

- **1230-Eat lunch after equipment check**
  - Grilled salmon, frozen broccoli, sweet potato fries, small drizzle of olive oil, 20 oz water
- **1400-Just finished workout**
  - 8 oz chocolate milk
- **1600-Snack between calls**
  - Beef jerky, apple, small handful of almonds, 10 oz water
- **1900-Dinner**
  - Rice, crockpot Mexican beef, mixed frozen veggies, ½ avocado
  - 20 oz of water
- **2100-Dessert (optional)**
  - Your choice of Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or a piece of fruit
  - 8 oz of water
- **1230-0300: 3 calls**
  - 8 oz water every wake up, dried fruits and nuts between calls
- **0430-0830: Sleep**
- **0830-Breakfast**
  - Oatmeal, bacon, cottage cheese or Greek yogurt, 20 oz water
- **0900-1145: 3 calls**
  - A couple of clementines
  - 12 oz water
Example Day of Fueling On-Shift (Lower Call Volume Shift)*

*Amount of food is dependent on the individual, this is simply an example*

**Firefighter Shift**

- **1230**-Eat lunch after equipment check
  - Grilled salmon, more frozen broccoli, small drizzle of olive oil, 20 oz water
- **1500**-Just finished workout
  - 8 oz chocolate milk
- **1630**-Snack
  - Beef jerky, apple, small handful of almonds, 10 oz water *(if no calls, reduce portion sizes except for water)*
- **1645-1830**-2 calls
  - 8-20 oz water after calls
- **1900**-Dinner
  - Smaller portion of white rice, crockpot Mexican beef, mixed frozen veggies, ½ avocado
  - 20 oz of water
- **2100**-Optional Dessert
  - Your choice of Greek yogurt, cottage cheese or a piece of fruit
  - 8 oz of water
- **0230**-1 call
  - 8 oz water. If truly hungry after water, have a piece of fruit
- **0430-0830**: Sleep
- **0830**-Breakfast
  - Oatmeal, *turkey bacon*, cottage cheese or Greek yogurt, 20 oz water
Example Day of Fueling Off-Shift (Training Day)*

*Amount of food is dependent on the individual, this is simply an example*

- **0800-Wake up**
  - Banana with peanut butter and 12 oz of water

- **0830-0915: Rowing, Pushup, KB Swing Circuit**
  - 20 oz water throughout workout
  - 8 oz chocolate milk

- **1000-1200: Son’s/daughter’s sporting event**
  - 20 oz water
  - Baby carrots

- **1230-On the go healthy lunch**
  - Chick-Fil-A sandwich (skip the bun, substitute with lettuce), fruit cup or side salad, 12 oz water

- **1330-1430: Nap**
  - 12 oz of water

- **1430-1730: Quality time with family (outside)**
  - 1 hard boiled egg, small fruit salad

- **1830-Dinner**
  - Greek salad, grilled steak, baked potato
  - 12 oz water

- **2100-Optional Dessert**
  - Your choice of Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or a piece of fruit
  - 8 oz water
Example Day of Fueling Off-Shift (Recovery Day)*

*Amount of food is dependent on the individual, this is simply an example*

- **0700: Wake up**
  - 8-12 oz water upon waking up
  - Get kiddos ready for school
- **0730-0745: Walk the kiddos to school**
  - Low intensity movement (blood flow) on a recovery day is crucial!
- **0800: Make breakfast**
  - Egg, spinach, cheese, Canadian bacon omelet
- **0900-1200: Side-gig, hobby, house work, or study time**
  - Optional snack: piece of fruit
  - 20 oz of water
- **1230: Lunch**
  - Rotisserie chicken, frozen mixed veggies, strawberries
  - 20 oz of water
- **1300-1530: Errands, Nap, Free time**
  - A couple of clementines
  - 20 oz water
- **1600-1630: Walk to pick up kiddo from school**
- **1630-1730: Mow the lawn**
  - 20 oz water
- **1800-Dinner**
  - Grilled fish, veggie kabobs, side salad
  - 20 oz water
- **2100-Optional Dessert**
  - Your choice of Greek Yogurt, cottage cheese, or a piece of fruit
Daily Hydration and Fueling Goals

- **Hydration Goal**: Urine should be light lemonade color to clear to ensure proper hydration.

- **Daily Fueling Goal**: take in a combination of carbohydrates, lean protein, and vegetables every 2-3 hours.
  - **Meal Goals**
    - 3-4 meals/day that use one of the Tactical Athlete Plate Templates depending on activity level.
  - **Snack Goals**
    - Between meals, your snacks should be a combination of both carbohydrates and protein. Below are examples:
      - A smaller version of what you prepared for breakfast or lunch
      - 8-12oz of chocolate milk
      - Beef Jerky and some fruit
      - Hard-boiled eggs and a granola bar
      - Greek Yogurt with fruit and/or honey
Pre-Workout Fueling

• Meal 3-4 hours prior to exercise or any physically taxing evolution

• If feeling low on fuel within an hour or less of exercise, eat a combination of carbohydrates and a small amount of protein

• Always include 8-20oz of water with it
  - Piece of fruit and Greek Yogurt
  - ½ Peanut butter sandwich
  - Piece of Toast and cottage cheese
  - ½ hard boiled egg and ½ English muffin
  - Small bowl of oatmeal
  - ½ Protein shake (with fruit or other carbohydrate)

• If trying to manage weight, skip it (unless you’re training first thing in the morning) OR make portion size smaller
Post-Workout Fueling

- 15 min-30 min after training or any physically taxing evolution

- Always include 8-20oz of water with it
  - 8-12 oz chocolate milk
  - Milk and a peanut butter and jelly/honey sandwich
  - Protein shake (with fruit or other carbohydrate)
  - Hard boiled egg and a granola bar
  - Protein bar (with some carbohydrates)
  - Frozen breakfast sandwich
  - Instant oatmeal flavored with protein powder

- If trying to manage weight, skip it OR make portion size smaller
Time

• Our most valuable, yet misused resource.
  o “I don’t know how to cook.”
  o “I have too much to study to cook.”
  o “I don’t know what to get at the grocery store.”

• Look at how you actually spend your free time.
  o If it’s important to you, make it happen!

• Bottom Line: It doesn’t have to be time-consuming!
Meal Prep Hacks

- **Crockpot Recipes**
  - Set it and forget it!
  - Time effective, tasty, nutritious

- **Cook in bulk**
  - 1 cup rice/pasta or several potatoes will last you about a week
  - Freeze what you don’t eat and save it for weeks when time is short

- **Freeze food for busy weeks**
  - Grab and go when time is short

- **Prepared foods at the grocery store**
  - Rotisserie chicken, premade salad
  - Find the prepared meals that fit The Tactical Athlete’s Plate

- **Frozen veggies**
  - Eliminates cutting and washing
  - Microwave or oven

- **Recruit a significant other or buddy for help**
  - Teamwork makes the dream work!
Caffeine on performance

• Has been shown to improve mental acuity and nervous system sharpness in moderate doses

• Consume 60-90 minutes before prior to desired impact

• 3mg/kg bodyweight daily max (Ex. 90kg (198lb) individual’s daily max would be 270mg)

• 80-150 mg in 1 cup of coffee

• NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR QUALITY SLEEP

• Energy Drinks are not recommended because of high sugar content and lack of regulation on ingredients contained within the drink

• Caffeine is a diuretic, so make sure you are taking in enough water to stay hydrated.
Supplements

• The term defines itself; they simply **supplement** tactical athlete nutrition

• Food first, and **only after consulting with a professional**, should supplements be considered

• **BOTTOM LINE**: Eat real food! No amount of supplements can outperform a feeding vs fueling mentality.
Alcohol

• Will **NEGATIVELY** affect your performance in 3 ways:
  
  o Alcohol will dehydrate you
  
  o Upon consumption, your body stops other functions *just to break down alcohol*.
  
  o Alcohol negatively affects your sleep (it may help you fall asleep faster, but the quality will not be as deep and restorative)
Striking a Balance

• It is possible to eat foods you enjoy AND reach your performance nutrition goals! *(make Win/Win Choices)*

• Portion control is key

• 90%/10% Rule
  o 3 meals/day = 21 meals/week
  o 10% of 21 = 2 meals a week that you can “cheat” within reason (aka watch your portions and slooo0000w down to truly enjoy!)

• Ice Cream? Treat yourself once in a while! Limit your serving by using a small bowl and slowly savor every bite.

• Drinking at a friend’s party? Do it! But go in with a game plan so it doesn’t turn into a 20 beer night.

• Diets and meal plans are okay for the short-term, but are not realistic for the long-term.

• Long-term change comes when you create behaviors and habits that are *repeatable*, *sustainable*, and allow the *freedom for balance* when life happens
Building Habits

- Try to slow down at meal time! This is difficult on shift, but when you can, aim for 25 minutes to finish your food. Treat each meal as a celebration.

- Stay hydrated to help prevent overeating

- Model your plate after one of the Tactical Athlete’s Plate depending on activity level

- Less processed foods satiate hunger more effectively (You’ll feel more full after eating baked potato than some potato chips)

- Consistent quality sleep (7-9 hours, dark) helps prevent cravings

- Include healthy fats and lean protein into meals and snacks to feel full
Take Home Points

• Fuel, don’t feed!
  o Purposeful, mindful eating
  o Your performance depends on it!

• Hydrate
  o Pee should be clear to LIGHT lemonade color

• Eat real food!
  o The closer it looks to when it was alive = more REAL (aka nutrient dense) food
  o Generally, the longer the ingredient list, the more processed it is
  o Stick to shopping the perimeter of the grocery store (Fresh food!)

• Put the Tactical Athlete’s Plate into practice.
Nutrition Resources

Lauren McGill
Registered Dietician

- Lauren is the dietitian through BlueCross/BlueShield
- City of Austin Health Coach
- Certified Specialist is Sports Dietetics
- E-mail to make an appointment: lauren_mcgill@bcbstx.com

Wellness Website Nutrition Page
- https://atxpublicsafetywellness.com/fitness/nutrition