

## **Competitive Advantage (1% Rule)**

Hockey is an ultra competitive sport and the higher the level, the closer the gap between goaltenders. Every goalie trains hard with daily practice, team workouts, and gains experience in the games. What you do outside of that can really separate yourself from the pack.

I always looked for little ways to get 1% better knowing that all these things would add up to have a big impact on my game when done consistently. Outside of required team training, I focused on my nutrition, sleep, hydration, mobility/flexibility, bike sprints, a certain number of breakaway saves after practice, 50 glove catches after practice, meditation, reaction ball drills, and visualization. I did these things on a daily basis to help me feel confident and prepared to play at my best. A lot of small things performed habitually will add up to make huge differences in the long run. Always look for ways to get a competitive advantage.

In this article, I'm going to talk about nutrition. The food that you eat everyday can have a big impact on your training and ultimately your performance, especially as you get older and climb the hockey ranks.

From about 13 years old, I really focused on my nutrition and continued to learn more and dedicate myself more to eating a healthy diet that would help me perform at my best. I felt that my choices with what foods to eat and what to avoid gave me an edge on other players and goalies when it came time for the games.

### **Overview of Nutrition for Athletes:**

Nutrition for athletes is important on a few levels: Energy, Recovery, & Overall Physical Condition. First, the food we eat is what gives us energy. Good clean food will make us feel more energetic. Conversely, bad food can make you feel lethargic and tired. To be the best, you cannot afford to have low energy throughout a practice and not maximize the opportunity to improve and you cannot afford to skip workouts or stretches because you do not have enough energy. Second, eating the right foods will help your body recover from your training and get you ready to go again the next day so that you can continue to work and train at a high level. Poor recovery on a regular basis can certainly lead to injuries. The fastest way to lose your starting job/practice net as a goaltender is by getting injured. Controlling what you eat and drink gives you a much better chance to stay healthy. Lastly, the food you eat has a significant impact on your overall physical condition. You can't outrun a bad nutrition protocol. Back to back games are a clear indicator of the condition someone is in and proper nutrition can go a long way in performing consistently each game.

There are very specific things you can focus on with nutrition that when done on a daily basis can make a big difference with how you feel and ultimately how you perform. I will outline those specifics now:

### **Hydration:**

One of the easiest, yet most overlooked and neglected components of nutrition, is hydration. Do this daily:

When you wake up: Drink 10-20 ounces of water immediately (1-2 glasses). This will help you get a head start on hydration for the day, especially since it is easy to dry out through the night.

Daily intake: Drink  $\frac{1}{2}$  your body weight in ounces of water per day excluding practice/workouts. This means if you weigh 150 pounds that you should drink at least 75 ounces of water per day. This does not include practices. You will drink more water during workouts and practices to replace lost sweat.

If you struggle with dehydration or cramps, consider adding electrolyte or salt packets to your water during practices, workouts, and games.

### **Foods to cut out/limit:**

Anything with added sugar should be avoided. Even healthy foods like yogurt and peanut butter sometimes have brands that add sugar to it, so be sure to check the labels.

Cut out soda/sugary drinks, sugary cereals, fried foods, PAM cooking spray (use avocado oil or extra virgin olive oil), creamy dressings on salads, extra sauces/condiments, highly processed deli meats, and anything with "High Fructose Corn Syrup".

### **Reading Labels:**

It is very important to get familiar with reading labels on food products. I will give you a few tips and things to look for when making a decision on packaged food.

**Added Sugar:** As discussed, you want to avoid added processed sugar as much as possible. If a product has a high amount of added sugar then it is best not to get it.

**Ingredient List:** The ingredient list is in order from the most to least. The first ingredient shown is the most prevalent ingredient in the product and so on. If you see sugar or high fructose corn syrup in one of the first few ingredients listed, you do not want that product. Also, if you do not recognize a lot of the words on an ingredient list then it is likely a highly processed product. The best labels have fewer ingredients and familiar foods on the ingredient list.

**Macronutrients:** Macronutrients are Fat, Carbs, and Protein. As an athlete, you will want to eat a lot of protein so always keep an eye on the Macros so you know what you are getting.

**Serving Size:** The calories listed on a label might be for just one serving, but the box or bag might contain 10 servings. Make sure you read the serving size, so you really know how much you're consuming.

## **After workouts/practices:**

Try to get a lot of protein and carbs in after a workout or practice. Drink either a protein shake or chocolate milk within 15-30 minutes after training and then a full meal with lean protein, carb, healthy fat, and vegetables within 1-2 hours if possible. This will help you recover faster from the training and prepare for the next day.

## **Good foods to eat:**

Focus on eating whole foods as close to their natural form as possible. Examples of whole foods are eggs, avocados, broccoli, anything that is in its natural original form and hasn't been processed. An athlete's diet should consist of lean protein, non-starchy vegetables, healthy fats, high-fiber carbs, and fruit. Below is a list of some very good foods to eat, but is not an all-inclusive list; however, it should give you a really good idea of what an elite athlete's nutrition should look like.

**Lean Protein:** Examples of lean protein are ground beef, steak, chicken, turkey, eggs, bison, salmon, cod, tuna, and protein powder either vegan or whey. All of these are great choices to have as a protein for your meal.

**Non-starchy vegetables:** Most vegetables fit this category. Always try to add color to your plate with vegetables. Some examples are kale, spinach, bell peppers, broccoli, asparagus, yellow squash, zucchini squash, and green beans, but there are plenty more options to fit your taste.

**Healthy Fats:** Fat is a necessary part of an athlete's diet as it contributes to prolonged energy. Some examples of healthy fats are nuts and nut butter, avocado/olive oil, avocados, coconut oil, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, hemp seeds, and dark chocolate (85-100% cacao).

**High-fiber carbs:** Athletes eat a lot of carbs for energy, but the quality of the carbs is important too. It is easy to eat pasta, bread, and white potatoes all the time, but try to focus on consuming some better carbs such as sweet potatoes, quinoa, chickpea pasta, brown rice, rolled oats, black beans, pinto beans, and squash.

**Fruit:** Eating fruit as an athlete is a great way to get some natural energy and to stay hydrated due to fruits' high water content. Some great fruits to eat are berries, apples, bananas, dates, and oranges. These fruits are great to have around the rink for a snack.

## **Smoothies:**

Smoothies are a great addition to an athlete's diet. Here are some great ingredients to have for your smoothies:

**Base:** Water, Almond Milk, Coconut Milk, Coconut Water

Fruit: Frozen Berries, Bananas, Apples

Fats: Hemp Seeds, Chia Seeds, Pumpkin Seeds, Natural Almond/Peanut Butter  
Protein: Lean Protein Powder

Optional add-ins: rolled oats, spinach/kale, ice, cinnamon.

### **Snacks:**

Snacking is common and every athlete does it. It's important to not lose track of your diet in between meals. Stay on track with these healthy snack ideas:

Apple/banana with almond/peanut butter

Celery/carrots with hummus

Beef Jerky (no added sugar)

Protein/Energy bars

Rice crackers with nut butter

Smoothies

Homemade Trail Mix (Nuts like almonds, cashews, peanuts, dried fruit like raisins or apricot, dark chocolate, seeds)

Greek or Coconut Yogurt with berries

### **TIROBAR:**

I developed my own all-natural protein + energy bar called TIROBAR. I really believe it is an ideal snack for an athlete. I always went to the rink with water and a protein bar and that is what went into me creating it. It is a date-based bar also consisting of nuts, hemp seeds, and pea protein. Vegan, gluten-free, and dairy free. The bars are 65 grams and meant to satiate a large appetite and provide clean energy for a workout/practice. Each bar has at least 15 grams of protein and zero added sugar. The natural sugar comes from dates, which are low glycemic meaning the sugar slowly releases into the bloodstream and does not cause a spike in blood sugar, which leads to longer lasting energy. The ingredients are all high quality whole foods. Each bar has just 5 ingredients. I wanted a simple label and clean bar that had familiar ingredients so athletes could be confident they knew exactly what they were eating. Great to have anytime of day, but especially 1-2 hours before a practice, game, or workout. I hope you try it out