



Weight Gain Tips for Athletes

To gain weight, athletes need to consume more calories than they use. This weight gain will include water, fat, and protein in muscle. To limit the amount of fat gain and increase muscle gains, athletes need to use effective exercise training and nutrition programs.

A common misconception among athletes is that the best way to build muscle or “bulk up” is to eat a high-protein diet. Adequate protein intake is essential when you are increasing muscle mass, but most of the energy needed to fuel muscle growth comes from an adequate calorie intake from carbohydrates and fats.

Weight gainer supplements are marketed to athletes with claims that these supplements will aid in the gain of muscle mass. Although these supplements may help increase daily calorie and protein intake, they have no benefits over food choices that provide the same amount of calories and protein.

Tips for a Healthy Weight Gain

1. Increasing calorie intake by 500 to 1000 calories per day can help supply the extra calories needed to gain lean weight.

2. It takes time to increase muscle weight.

Most athletes can successfully gain $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 pounds of muscle weight per week if they eat enough food to meet their additional calorie and protein needs for weight gain or and train properly.

3. Choose higher calorie foods.

For example, choose juices over whole fruits and low-fat milk over skim milk or water.

4. Eat larger food portions. Don't skip meals.

Increasing the amounts of food that you eat at one time will help supply the calories needed to gain muscle weight.

5. Eat five or more meals a day.

Eat plenty of high calorie snacks plus meals throughout the day.

6. Drink plenty of fluids that supply calories like juice, milk, milkshakes, and sports beverages.

For example, drinking $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of grape or cranberry juice supplies 1000 calories. $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of 2% milk supplies 720 calories.

7. Set realistic goals.

Genetic factors can play a large role in physique. You are not going to look like Arnold if your parents look like Pee Wee Herman.

8. Get regular, restful sleep – 7 - 8 hours per night. Growth hormone peaks in deep sleep. Adequate rest is essential for your body to build new lean body mass.

Nutritional Strategies for Weight Gain

Eating additional calories from a well-balanced diet of a variety of performance foods is essential for healthy weight gain. Choose your foods wisely, and eat more servings of wholesome foods from each Food Group instead of just increasing fat or protein intake. Eating this way and proper exercise will help maximize your lean weight gain and minimize unwanted fat weight gain.

High-Calorie Snack Ideas

Snacking is a great way to increase calories. Be careful of snacks that help increase your calorie intake but are loaded with fat:

Eat High-Calorie, Nutrient Dense Snacks:

- ✓ Soft pretzels with peanut butter
- ✓ Low-fat milkshakes
- ✓ Dried fruits
- ✓ Bean and cheese burritos
- ✓ Bagels and peanut butter
- ✓ Baked potatoes with chili
- ✓ Granola and yogurt
- ✓ Yogurt, fruit, and nuts
- ✓ Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches
- ✓ Low-fat cheese and crackers
- ✓ Fruit smoothies
- ✓ High calorie granola bars or energy bars
- ✓ Apple, cranberry and grape juices
- ✓ Almonds, walnuts, peanuts
- ✓ Instant breakfast drinks
- ✓ Canned Liquid meals



Weight Gain Plan Following the Sports Food Swap® Guidelines

Meal	Swaps	Calories
<i>Breakfast</i>		
	1 cup 2% Milk	120
	3 eggs, scrambled	300
	1 Wheat English Muffin	160
	1 Large Banana	130
	2 Tablespoons Jam	96
<i>Snack</i>		
	1 apple	60
	15 Wheat Crackers (thin)	130
	1 String Cheese	75
<i>Lunch</i>		
	12 ounces 2% Milk	180
	4 Slices Roasted Turkey Breast, lettuce, tomato, pickle	150
	2 Slices Wheat Bread	160
	1 cup baby carrots	60
	1 pear	60
<i>Snack</i>		
	1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt	200
	½ cup blueberries	60
	¼ low-fat granola	90
<i>Dinner</i>		
	12 ounces 2% Milk	180
	5 ounces grilled chicken breast	335
	1 cup wild rice	165
	1 cup sliced peaches	110
	2 cups broccoli with melted cheddar cheese	190
<i>Snack</i>		
	1 cup orange juice	170
	1 soft pretzel	190
	2 Tablespoons peanut butter	186
TOTAL		3,557