

## 5 FOODS SOFTBALL PLAYERS MUST EAT

(Source: <http://www.softballspot.com>)

Coach Becky Wittenburg at SoftballSpot.com (<http://www.softballspot.com/catalog.html>) gets a lot of questions about sports nutrition from readers. She has identified her 5 favorite foods for Softball Players:

- 1. Whole grains** – Whole grain food such as cereal, bagels, pasta, and bread give good, long-lasting energy to the whole body. As the most important food group, athletes should eat many whole grain carbohydrates before an event.
- 2. Peanut butter** – Peanut butter is a good source of protein and essential fats, and it is easy to carry and eat on the go. Other protein sources will work as well, such as lean meat or dairy; the important thing is to get adequate protein before and after a work out. Protein helps the body in maintaining aerobic metabolism instead of anaerobic metabolism, which prevents the body from taking protein from lean tissue. Adequate protein speeds recovery and helps in actual performance situations.
- 3. Fresh fruits and Vegetables** – Fresh produce is a great way to get vitamins and minerals that help the body function as normal. They are usually fat-free and contain lots of energy for the body to use during exercise. Some fruits, such as bananas, contain potassium, a mineral that regulates water levels in the body and stabilizes muscle contraction. Low potassium levels can lead to muscle cramps and fatigue, so eating potassium-rich foods is a good idea. However, it is important to regulate potassium intake, because too much too quickly can lead to a heart attack. Athletes should take in 435 milligrams of potassium for every hour they exercise. While potassium does not aid in actual performance, it speeds recovery and should be considered as one of the most important supplements to an exercise program.
- 4. Calcium-Rich Foods** – Foods such as cheese, yogurt, and milk contain necessary calcium, which creates strong bones and protects athletes from injury. These dairy products are also a good source of protein, but they should be eaten well before an event, as they take some time to process. If the body does not tolerate dairy well, supplements should be included to ensure that athletes receive the recommended daily intake of 1000 milligrams. As an example, a cup of skim milk provides about 300 milligrams of calcium.
- 5. Fiber-Rich Foods** – Fiber is the nutritional component that keeps athletes full and regulates the digestive tract. Many of the foods already mentioned include fiber, but it is important for coaches to know which foods help athletes regulate fiber levels. Examples of fiber-rich foods include whole grains, apples, berries, almonds, and legumes. A simple way to determine the necessary amount of fiber is to add 5 to the athlete's age. For example, a 10-year-old athlete needs about 15 grams of fiber daily. After the age of 15, athletes need 20-25 grams of fiber a day.

