

The athlete performance pyramid

What is it?

The Athlete Performance Pyramid illustrates the hierarchy of factors that contribute to athletic success. While many athletes focus on supplements or advanced nutrition strategies, the greatest improvements in performance come from consistently mastering the fundamentals at the base of the pyramid.

1. Training Plan (Foundation)

A well-designed training program is the cornerstone of athletic development. Training provides the stimulus needed to improve strength, endurance, speed, power, and sport-specific skills. Without an appropriate training plan, even the best nutrition or recovery strategies will have limited impact.

2. Sleep Hygiene

Sleep is where much of the body's recovery and adaptation occur. Poor sleep can negatively affect performance, recovery, decision-making, mood, and injury risk.

3. Eating Enough

Many athletes underestimate their energy needs. Consuming adequate calories is essential to support training, recovery, immune function, hormone health, and long-term performance.

4. Nutrient Timing

Once overall intake is adequate, strategically timing nutrition around training can provide additional benefits. Nutrient timing helps athletes maximize training quality, recovery, and performance.

5. Pre-Fuel

Optimizing nutrition immediately before training or competition can improve energy levels, performance, focus, and endurance. However, this strategy is only effective when the foundational layers below it are already in place.

6. Sport Supplements (Peak of the Pyramid)

Supplements sit at the very top because they generally provide the smallest performance gains compared to the layers below. While certain evidence-based supplements can be beneficial in specific situations, they cannot compensate for inadequate training, poor sleep, insufficient energy intake, or suboptimal nutrition practices.

