

Nutrition Tips for Track and Field Athletes

28 April 2020

My name is Joseph Maxwell and I'm an All-American track and field athlete at the University of Tennessee. As a shot putter, I'm faced with a unique set of challenges when it comes to preparing for and recovering from competition.

One of the secret weapons in my arsenal is my strict supplement routine, which I've developed over the years with the input of several Olympians and nutritionists. Fundamentals of Supplementation for Track and Field

A particularly unique aspect of track and field is the fast turnaround time between training and competition. With training starting in September, and our first indoor competition in December, track athletes have only three and a half months to prepare for the season.

With power events like shot put demanding explosive strength, and endurance events like long- distance races demanding extreme toughness, track and field is undoubtedly the most diverse sport. Because of this, the supplement schedule for track athletes is particularly interesting (and **needs to be tailored to an athlete's specific events**).

Supplements for All Track and Field Athletes

Regardless of the event you compete in, as a track athlete your foundation will be a strong level of general health, sleep, and recovery.

My recommendations to cover your bases in these departments are:

- 1. A well-rounded multivitamin for general health**
- 2. Supplementing with melatonin for a good night's sleep**
- 3. Consuming protein powder to promote recovery and muscle growth**

There's nothing that can set your training back more than getting sick or injured. A solid **multivitamin (make sure it has vitamin C and Zinc)** has helped me build my immune system, and I haven't caught a cold in the past 2 track seasons.

One of our coaches likes to say, **"you are what you sleep."** **A good night's sleep is crucial for athletes.** If you have trouble falling asleep, taking a melatonin supplement half an hour before going to bed is a great natural way to improve your sleep.

Finally, protein is the building block for adding size and muscle to your body. Even if you're a distance runner that isn't trying to add a bunch of mass, protein powder will help with your overall recovery. I personally put on 60 pounds of lean mass during my first couple of seasons at the University of Tennessee. This added size and strength has been invaluable as a shot putter.

Supplements for Power Athletes

Athletes competing in power events like sprints and throws are putting huge demands on their body for power and explosiveness. For power athletes, I recommend supplementing with:

1. Creatine

2. Pre-workout supplement on competition days

Creatine is one of the most heavily researched supplements on the market, and it helps your muscles produce energy. I've personally found that it speeds up my post-workout recovery, which is super important for track and field athletes.

One important thing to note is that you can overdo it on pre-workout! I try to save pre-workout for only the hardest training days (and competitions of course).

Supplements for Endurance Athletes

Endurance athletes, like long-distance runners, are focused on muscle endurance and oxygen uptake. There are two supplements in particular that I've seen firsthand help my teammates in these areas:

1. Beetroot extract

2. Glutamine

An NIH study showed that beetroot extract reduces your body's oxygen uptake. This is ideal for endurance track athletes, as it allows you to push yourself longer and harder. Glutamine is an excellent choice for athletes that need to generate energy over a long period of time (as opposed to say, a sprinter). I personally supplement with glutamine during the offseason when I'm getting through intense aerobic workouts, and it's a popular supplement among endurance athletes.

Final Thoughts

While no supplement is a silver bullet, a solid supplement routine can help you establish what I call the 1% difference. At the highest levels of track and field, the details are key. Being 1% better than your rivals on competition day can make the difference between an underwhelming performance and a strong finish.

<https://www.watchathletics.com/article/11114/nutrition-tips-for-track-and-field-athletes/>