Athlete Scenario

I want to get stronger so I can perform better in the discus. My teammates and I have been reading about muscle-building protein in fitness magazines. To be honest, the more I read the more confused I get! How much and what type of protein should I be eating?

Quality Matters

- Animal-derived proteins (eggs, meat, poultry, and fish) are high quality because they contain all of the essential amino acids (EAAs), which are building blocks for body proteins.
- Some plant-based proteins (soy, quinoa, amaranth, and buckwheat) contain all EAAs while most plant-based proteins (legumes, grains, nuts and seeds) are generally low in one or more EAAs. If not consuming animal-derived proteins, a variety of these foods must be consumed in your diet to provide all the EAAs.

Determining Your Protein Needs

- The recommendations for athletes are 1.2 – 2.0 grams of protein per kilogram (g/kg) of body mass.
- If an athlete is 1) engaged in intense training with the goal of increasing lean body mass and losing fat mass, or 2) injured, s/he should aim for about 2.0 g/kg.
- To maximize muscle growth, consume around 15 – 25 grams of high quality protein within two hours after training and every 4 hours while you are awake.

Protein-Rich Meals

- **Breakfast:** Eggs with low-fat milk and oatmeal
- **Lunch:** Grilled chicken with vegetables and rice
- **Dinner:** Fish tacos with rice and black beans
- **Snacks:** Low-fat greek yogurt, string cheese, edamame, almonds, peanut butter and cottage cheese

Tips to Take With You

1. Distribute protein intake evenly throughout the day by including high-quality proteins at meals and snacks.
2. After exercise, choose a mix of protein-rich foods and carbohydrates, and if needed, incorporate protein supplements (e.g. whey).
3. A sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help determine your individualized protein needs.

Contact SCAN

www.scandpg.org
800.249.2875