

Diet: The Limiting Factor For Teens Struggling To Gain Lean Mass

One of the most common goals for young athletes is the addition of muscle in preparation for an upcoming season. This article will cover a critical component in gaining muscle for young athletes.

I have found one of the easiest parts of gaining lean mass for the young athlete is executing a lifting program. The limiting and most overlooked factors are the quantity, quality, and frequency of caloric intake. An athlete must consume the needed calories to make adequate weight gains during off-season training. I strongly believe that a 100 percent effort in the weight room combined with a 50 percent effort in nutrition yields 50 percent. This means 50 percent of the effort in the weight room has been wasted!

I have often heard, "but I eat all the time"! The young athlete must realize when weight gain has not taken place not enough calories have been consumed! Overall this aspect is as basic as putting fuel in a vehicle. No fuel and the vehicle will not take you where you want to go. The young athlete struggling to gain muscle is continually almost out of fuel and without constant and regular refueling the athlete will not only fail to gain the desired weight but will lose weight. The unfortunate part of this scenario is that in order to fulfill an immediate need for protein the athletes body often consumes its own muscle.

Many people trying to loose weight to further their fitness goals may find the concept of a person struggling to gain weight a problem they wish they had. In reality gaining weight can be very challenging to someone going through growth spurts and performing one or more workouts and/or practices per day.

The only solution is a concerted team effort between the athlete, family, coaches, and teachers. One of the first challenges in consuming adequate calories is availability. A good breakfast is mandatory with mini meals to be consumed as often as every two to three hours during the day. All meals should be properly balanced between carbohydrates, proteins & fats depending on the specific needs for that time of the day. Try to make consumption of quality whole foods a priority whenever possible. A family effort to prepare meals in advance is the best way to provide quality fuel during the day. Coaches & trainers must continually strive to make practices, workout times, and schedules as efficient as possible in order to allow adequate regeneration time. Teachers and administrators that can find a way to allow athletes fueling times during the school day can also have a positive impact on the progress a young person makes towards established goals.

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