**Keeping Energy Levels: Emphasize Starchy Foods**

Athletes need plenty of starchy foods because, along with proper training, these foods cause muscle and liver cells to store glycogen. Glycogen is a vital energy source for most sports. When muscle cells run out of glycogen, muscle fatigue sets in and performance suffers. Along with a proper exercise program, eating a normal, varied diet from the Food Guide Pyramid with emphasis on starchy foods will result in enough stored glycogen to carry you through 90 minutes of vigorous activity. And that's enough for most high-school activities.

Unfortunately, many athletes think of starchy foods as "fattening" and cut out breads, cereals, and starchy vegetables. The results are predictable: low glycogen, low energy, and poor performance. The athlete who wants top performance must eat starchy food so that she goes into an event with glycogen reserves. Starchy foods are not fattening in themselves. Eating more than you need of any food puts on pounds. The athlete who is training properly shouldn't worry about extra weight from starchy foods.

**Foods High in Starch**

- **Pastas**
  - Macaroni
  - Spaghetti
  - Noodles
  - Ravioli

- **Dried beans**
  - Lima beans
  - Pinto beans
  - Kidney beans

- **Rice**
  - Brown rice
  - Wild rice
  - White rice
  - polished or unpolished

- **Breads**
  - Rolls
  - Muffins
  - Crackers
  - Sliced breads
  - Pancakes

- **Dried peas**
  - Split peas
  - Lentils
  - Black-Eyed peas

- **Starchy Vegetables**
  - Potatoes
  - Carrots
  - Peas
  - Corn
  - Winter squash
  - Sweet potatoes

- **Cereals**
  - Hot cereals (like oatmeal)
  - Cold cereals
  - *Avoid highly sugared cereals*

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