EMPYREAN HEALTH & WELLNESS
ATHLETE OPTIMIZATION PROGRAM
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Meal Prep & the Plate

Two habits carry most of the weight: cooking at a better time, and getting the proportions on the plate right for the kind of day a player is having.

G Meal prepping: staying fueled, avoiding bad choices

Junior hockey schedules are demanding and often unpredictable. The biggest threat to good nutrition usually isn't a lack of knowledge; it's a lack of time. Preparing food ahead removes that decision point — and it doesn't need to be elaborate.

01 Batch-cook starches and proteins

A large tray of chicken thighs or ground turkey plus a big pot of rice or pasta, once or twice a week, gives you a mix-and-match base for several meals.

02 Keep grab-and-go stocked

Washed fruit, portioned yogurt cups, hard-boiled eggs and pre-made sandwiches mean a good option is always as easy to grab as a bad one.

03 Pack a rink bag

A small cooler with a sandwich, fruit and a drink for the car ride home from a late practice prevents the drive-through scenario entirely.

04 Prep components, not just meals

Chopped vegetables, cooked grains and cooked proteins stored separately combine differently each night, so nothing feels repetitive.

05 Learn how to cook your meals

Most players are old enough to portion leftovers or assemble their own snack bag — it builds a habit they'll need once they're living on their own.

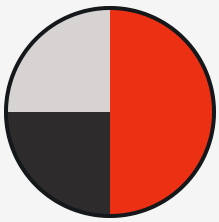
THE BOTTOM LINE

Meal prep isn't about extra cooking — it's about doing the same cooking at a better time, so the choice a tired, hungry player faces at 8 PM is already made for them.

H How to build a plate

The same foods appear on all three plates — what changes is how much of the plate each one takes up. Adapted from the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee's athlete nutrition resources.

STARCHES · LEAN PROTEIN · VEG & FRUIT



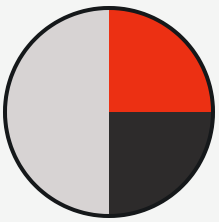
Night before a game

Half starches · quarter lean protein · quarter vegetables · fruit and about 2 tbsp of fats. A generous pasta, rice or potato dinner — familiar food, nothing exotic.



Regular day & game day

Roughly equal thirds: starches · lean protein · vegetables, with fruit and about 1 tbsp of fats. On a heavier day, add starch rather than changing the shape.



Recovery day & days off

Half vegetables and fruit · quarter starches · quarter lean protein, with about 1 tsp of fats. Protein stays present — this is when muscle repair happens.

Six meal ideas — player approved

Easy, no-experimentation lunch and dinner ideas for athletes ages 16–20, built to cover the three essentials: carbohydrates for energy, protein for recovery, and healthy fats for hormone regulation.

1 Chicken, Rice & Broccoli Bowl

Grilled or baked chicken breast/thigh · white or jasmine rice · steamed broccoli · drizzle of olive oil

CARB: RICE · PROTEIN: CHICKEN · FAT: OLIVE OIL

Batch-cookable — ideal for grab-n-go; add teriyaki or BBQ sauce for flavor without complexity.

2 Beef & Cheese Burrito Bowl

Ground beef (80/20) · white rice or tortilla · black beans · shredded cheese, sour cream, salsa

CARB: RICE, TORTILLA, BEANS · PROTEIN: BEEF, BEANS, CHEESE · FAT: CHEESE, SOUR CREAM, BEEF FAT

Homemade "Chipotle" format — player approved.

3 Baked Potato Bar

Large baked potatoes · ground beef/turkey, chili or pulled pork · shredded cheese, butter, sour cream

CARB: POTATO · PROTEIN: BEEF, PORK · FAT: CHEESE, BUTTER

Good for pre-game — potatoes are easy on the stomach and carb-dense.

4 Spaghetti with Meat Sauce

Pasta · ground beef or turkey marinara · parmesan · side of garlic bread or a bread roll

CARB: PASTA, BREAD · PROTEIN: MEAT · FAT: PARMESAN, OLIVE OIL IN SAUCE

The classic carb-load dinner — always a hit, easy to make in bulk.

5 Turkey / Chicken Sandwich Combo

Deli turkey or chicken on whole wheat or white bread · cheese, mayo · side of chips or pretzels and a piece of fruit

CARB: BREAD, CHIPS, FRUIT · PROTEIN: DELI MEAT, CHEESE · FAT: MAYO, CHEESE

Zero-cook option for road trips or quick lunches between school and practice.

6 Steak (or Ground Beef) Quesadillas

Flour tortillas · shredded steak or ground beef · cheese · side of rice and guacamole

CARB: TORTILLA, RICE · PROTEIN: BEEF, CHEESE · FAT: CHEESE, GUACAMOLE

Pan-fried in under 10 minutes, very portable for team meals.

Practical notes

PORTIONING	Keep the same six meals on rotation — variety matters less than volume. Older teen athletes often need 3,000–4,500+ kcal/day depending on training load.
TIMING	Carb-heavy meals (spaghetti, potato bar) work well the night before or the day of a game. Lean more on protein and fat on recovery days.
HYDRATION & DAIRY	Milk with meals is an easy, low-effort way to add protein, carbs and fat all at once.