

NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

HEALTHY MIND HEALTHY BODY HEALTHY FUTURE

SMALL-SCALE PARTNERSHIPS IN YOUTH | 2025-1-PL01-KA210-YOU-000361815



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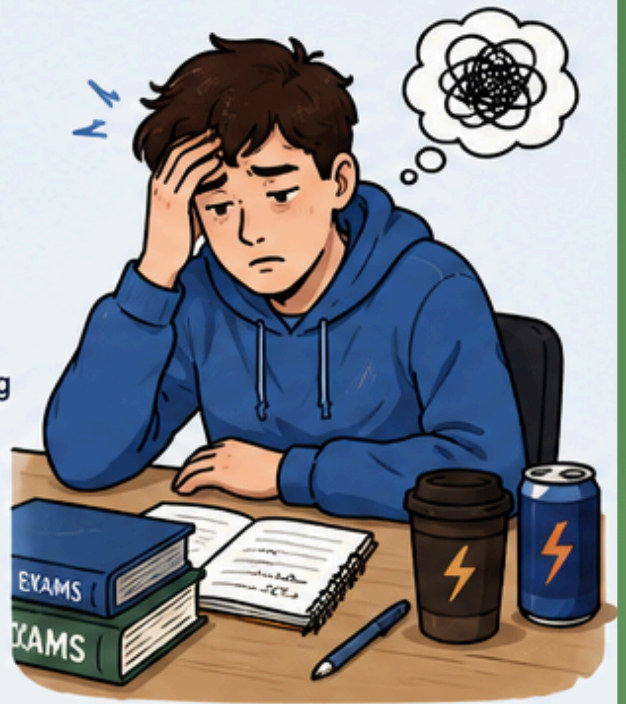


CASE STUDY 1

EXAM SEASON

Meet Alex (18)

Alex is in his final year of high school and is preparing for important exams. He spends most of the day sitting at his desk, studying for 8–10 hours. To stay awake, he drinks energy drinks and coffee. He often skips breaks because he feels guilty if he isn't studying. Recently, he has noticed headaches, neck and back pain, difficulty concentrating, and feels stressed almost every day. Although he knows exercise is healthy, he says, "I don't have time."



YOUR TASK

Create a Movement Prescription that helps Alex reduce stress, improve concentration, relieve muscle tension and fit movement into a busy study schedule.

1. Diagnosis

Main challenge: Alex is experiencing high levels of academic stress while spending most of his day sitting and studying. He relies on caffeine and energy drinks to maintain concentration and neglects physical activity.

Impact on physical and mental health:

- Neck, shoulder, and back tension from prolonged sitting.
- Headaches and fatigue.
- Reduced concentration despite excessive caffeine intake. High stress and anxiety levels.
- Poor work-life balance and limited recovery time.

2. Recommended Activities

- Daily brisk walking.
- Stretching and mobility exercises.
- Short bodyweight workouts.
- Breathing and relaxation exercises.

3. Weekly Plan and Menu

Movement Plan:

Monday-Friday: 20-minute walk after studying.

Tuesday & Thursday: 20-minute bodyweight workout.

Daily: 5-minute stretching break every 2–3 hours.

Sunday: 45-minute walk in nature.

Alex's long study days require regular meals that provide a steady supply of energy and

nutrients. Skipping meals and relying heavily on coffee and energy drinks may leave him feeling tired and make it harder to maintain stable concentration throughout the day. For Alex, the main priorities are regular meals, slow-release sources of energy, sufficient protein, fruit and vegetables, healthy fats, and adequate hydration. He should also gradually reduce his dependence on energy drinks rather than using caffeine as a substitute for food, rest, or movement.

Breakfast – start the day with sustained energy. Alex should avoid beginning a long study day without eating. A breakfast combining complex carbohydrates, protein, and fruit can provide more sustained energy than a highly caffeinated drink alone.

- Wholegrain porridge with pear, cinnamon and pumpkin seeds
- Bread with avocado and boiled egg
- Natural yoghurt with oats, apple and walnuts
- Buckwheat pancakes with natural yoghurt and fresh fruit

Wholegrain cereals, oats and buckwheat provide carbohydrates that can support energy needs during a long study session, while eggs, yoghurt, and seeds provide protein and other nutrients.

Mid-morning snack – prevent long gaps between meals. Since Alex often studies for several hours without taking a break, a planned snack can help him avoid becoming extremely hungry and reaching for energy drinks or highly processed snacks.

- A banana with a small portion of peanut butter
- Natural yoghurt with berries
- A pear and a handful of pumpkin seeds

The snack does not need to be large. Its purpose is to provide nourishment during a long study period and encourage Alex to take a short break away from his desk.

Lunch – the main source of nourishment during the study day. Lunch should include a source of carbohydrates, protein, vegetables, and healthy fats.

- Turkey with couscous and roasted vegetables
- Lentil stew with wholegrain bread and a side salad
- Baked white fish with sweet potato and green beans
- Chickpea and vegetable wrap with yoghurt-based sauce
- Vegetable and bean soup with rye bread and a boiled egg

Carbohydrate-rich foods such as couscous, sweet potato, and wholegrain bread provide energy for the brain and body, while legumes, fish, and lean meat provide protein. Vegetables add fibre and a variety of vitamins and minerals.

Afternoon study snack – support concentration without relying on stimulants

Instead of another energy drink or a packet of sweets, Alex could prepare a snack before starting his afternoon study session.

Options:

- Homemade oat bar with seeds and dried fruit.
- Kefir with a piece of fruit

- Wholegrain toast with hummus
- Cottage cheese with cucumber and rye crackers
- A small smoothie made from milk or yoghurt and fruit

Dinner – recovery after a demanding day. Dinner should be nourishing but not excessively heavy, especially if Alex studies late.

- Vegetable and lentil curry with brown or wholegrain rice
- Turkey and vegetable stir-fry with noodles
- Baked cod with roasted vegetables and quinoa
- Bean and vegetable chilli with wholegrain bread
- Vegetable frittata with a side salad and rye bread

A balanced dinner gives Alex an opportunity to replenish energy and nutrients after a long day while providing protein to support the body.

Hydration and caffeine

Alex should keep water available while studying and drink regularly throughout the day. A practical target can be around 2–2.5 litres of fluids per day, with needs increasing during hot weather or physical activity.

A simple rule for Alex

Study → pause → hydrate → eat regularly → move. Long study sessions do not have to mean sitting continuously for hours. A short movement break combined with water and a nourishing snack can become part of Alex's study routine.

Why Will the Nutrition Plan Help?

Regular, balanced meals can help Alex avoid long periods without food and provide a more consistent supply of energy during demanding study days. Combining carbohydrate sources with protein, fibre, and healthy fats can also make meals and snacks more satisfying.

Reducing dependence on energy drinks and replacing them with regular food, hydration, movement, and more recovery can support concentration and energy management.

5. Healthy Habit Challenge. Take a 10-minute walk after every major study session.

6. Motivational Message: "Taking care of your body is not taking time away from your goals-it helps you reach them."