

NUTRITION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

HEALTHY MIND HEALTHY BODY HEALTHY FUTURE

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CASE STUDY 3

ONE MORE GAME

Meet Daniel (17)

Daniel loves online gaming. After school, he usually spends five or six hours playing with his friends. He often eats snacks while gaming, skips PE lessons whenever possible, and says, "Sport just isn't for me." Recently, he has started experiencing neck pain, lower back discomfort, low energy, and becomes tired after walking even short distances. He enjoys competition but doesn't like traditional sports.



YOUR TASK

Design a Movement Prescription that reduces the negative effects of long sitting, increases Daniel's daily movement, is realistic for someone who doesn't enjoy traditional sports and keeps him motivated.

1. Diagnosis

Main challenge:

Daniel spends long hours gaming, has a sedentary lifestyle, and associates sport only with traditional competitive activities.

Impact on physical and mental health:

- Poor posture.
- Neck and lower back discomfort.
- Low fitness and endurance.
- Reduced daily energy levels.
- Increased health risks related to inactivity.

2. Recommended Activities

- Active video games (exergaming).
- Cycling.
- Walking challenges.
- Functional fitness workouts.

3. Weekly Plan and Menu

Movement Plan

Daily: 15-minute walk.

Tuesday & Thursday: 30-minute cycling session.

Saturday: Active gaming or recreational sport.

Daily: Stretching after gaming sessions.

Daniel's current routine makes fast foods an easy choice, when he is focused on gaming. His nutrition plan should be simple, practical, and easy to fit around his gaming schedule. The aim is not to remove his favourite foods completely, but to replace some less nutritious choices with meals and snacks that provide energy and support his lifestyle. As Daniel is beginning to include more movement, his meals should provide a good balance of carbs for energy, protein for muscle maintenance and recovery, healthy fats, vegetables and fruit.

Breakfast – is a strong start without complicated preparation. Choose quick meals that require little preparation:

- Wholegrain tortilla with scrambled eggs, spinach, and cheese
- Overnight oats with milk, pear, and sunflower seeds
- Wholegrain toast with cottage cheese and tomato

Wholegrain bread, oats, and other slow carbs can provide longer-lasting energy, while eggs, dairy products, and seeds add protein and other nutrients.

Lunch – a balanced meal between gaming and other activities

Instead of relying on pizza, burgers, or other fast food every day, prepare simple meals that are still convenient.

- Beef and vegetables with rice
- Chicken and vegetable couscous bowl
- Baked potatoes with tuna, yoghurt sauce, and salad

It provides carbs for energy, together with protein and vegetables. Beans and vegetables also provide fibre, which supports digestion and helps meals feel more satisfying.

Gaming Snack – make the easy option a better option. Daniel often eats snacks while gaming, so completely removing this habit may not be realistic. Instead, he can change what is available next to his computer.

- Sliced apple or pear with peanut butter
- Carrot and cucumber sticks with hummus
- Homemade popcorn without excessive salt or added fat
- A small handful of nuts with dried fruit

A useful strategy is to prepare the snack before starting a gaming session.

Dinner – simple food that supports recovery. After a day with more movement, dinner can provide a combination of protein, carbohydrates, and vegetables.

- Chicken and vegetable fajitas
- Baked salmon with couscous and steamed vegetables
- Beef and vegetable rice bowl

Including protein at the evening meal supports muscle maintenance, while carbohydrates help replenish energy after cycling, walking, or other activities.

Hydration

Daniel should keep a bottle of water next to his gaming setup and drink regularly rather than waiting until he feels thirsty.

A practical goal is to make water his main everyday drink and reduce sugary and energy drinks. Water, sparkling water, or unsweetened tea can be simple alternatives.

A Simple Nutrition Strategy for Daniel

Rather than trying to completely change his lifestyle overnight, Daniel can make small replacements:

- Chips → popcorn or nuts
- Sugary drink → water or sparkling water
- Takeaway every time → simple homemade meal several times a week
- Sweets → fruit with yoghurt
- Eating directly from a large packet → prepare one portion before starting the game

Why Will the Nutrition Plan Help?

A more balanced eating pattern can provide Daniel with more consistent energy throughout the day and support his transition from a highly sedentary routine towards greater physical activity. Protein-rich foods can support muscle maintenance, while carbohydrates provide energy for walking, cycling, and recreational activities. Fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes also provide fibre and a variety of essential nutrients.

5. Healthy Habit Challenge: Before starting a gaming session, prepare a bottle of water and one balanced snack instead of taking a large packet of chips or sweets to the computer.

6. Motivational Message: "Every level starts with a first step."

