



### WHEN TO CHOOSE A SPORT OR NUTRITIONAL BAR

- As a convenient snack (easy to pack, lightweight and nutrient dense)
- For long exercise or leisure activities where food is not available (hiking, biking, canoeing)
- As part of a meal. Sport or supplement bars are not a meal by themselves.
- Useful for the traveling athlete who has minimal facilities for food preparation and storage
- Good for use when the athlete has minimal time to eat between exercise sessions
- Portable snack for the athlete with a busy lifestyle
- Compact fuel source during exercise sessions, especially when hunger is likely, and/or it is impractical to take substantial supplies of food.

### NUTRIENT COMPOSITION

- Fortified with a variety of vitamins, minerals, herbals
- Wide range of macro-nutrient levels (carbohydrate, protein, fat)
- Calories range from 100-300+ calories per bar
- May contain fiber so consume with plenty of fluids
- Comparison shop for bars that have the nutrients you are least likely to get enough of (calcium, protein, vitamins, minerals, etc.)

### COST

- Minimum cost per bar is typically \$1.00
- Some bars are \$2.00 or more each!
- You pay more for the bars that have more nutrients added
- You pay more for packaging, labeling and convenience

### PALATABILITY

- Varies greatly depending on the bar
- Texture varies - some are hard, dense and may take a while to chew
- Many flavors to choose from

### SAFETY

- Sport bars, nutritional supplements and herbal remedies are not regulated by the FDA or any other organization.
- Buyer beware - ingredients you're not aware of may be added to the sport bar or supplement (caffeine, ephedra, other stimulant herbs).
- Most bars are made with typical food ingredients (soy, fruit, dairy, wheat) so they are probably safe.
- Ask a health care professional who is knowledgeable about nutrition and supplements.

There are no magical powers in sport bars. If you eat them while playing sports you won't necessarily improve performance. They will not magically burn fat or help you lose weight. Eating a variety of foods, with plenty of fruits and vegetables, will provide you with a better base of healthful ingredients than simply eating a sport bar. Bars are convenient and can be an appropriate "supplement" to an overall nutrition plan.

Sports bars are often oversized, leading to inappropriate replacement of whole foods and over-reliance on expensive alternatives. Food sources should always be considered as the first option for meals and snacks.

Sports bars can be more expensive than whole foods and should be used for the specific conditions which they are most suited rather than just consuming them as a general snack.

Athletes should be encouraged to practice use and assess tolerance during training before using sports bars in the competition setting.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>