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## Pre-Game Meals / Snacks; Before a Competition:

### During a Competition

The GOAL:

- An empty stomach and gastrointestinal tract, but enough fuel for the muscles and enough food to prevent hunger.
- A settled stomach and a confident athlete.
- A well hydrated, comfortable athlete.

Why?:

So that the blood will go to the working muscles, not the digestive organs. Because muscles rely primarily on fuel stored from meals eaten in the days before the competition. Food eaten on the day of the game fuels the brain and keeps the muscles topped up when the competition is long or intermittent.

So that pre-competition nerves don't upset the stomach.

Items recommended for pre-game meals / snacks:

Drinks	Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Water</li><li>• Apple Juice</li><li>• Orange Juice</li><li>• Fruit Juice</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fruit bars</li><li>• Fig Newtons</li><li>• Fruit - fresh or dried</li><li>• Raisins</li><li>• Apple</li><li>• Banana</li><li>• Saltines</li><li>• Popcorn (no butter)</li></ul>

1 Hour before the game:

(High carbohydrate, Low fat, little protein, Low fiber, primarily liquid)

- Milk and a medium banana
- Plain muffin and fruit juice
- Toast with jam and milk

2 Hours before the game:

(High carbohydrate, Low fat, moderate protein)

- Cereal, banana and milk
- Plain muffin and fruit juice
- Toast with jam and milk

3 Hours before the game:

(High carbohydrate, Moderate fat, more protein)

- Sandwich - Lean meat, fish poultry or egg, milk, fruit ...or
- 2-3 ounces of lean meat (not fried), 1 medium potato or rice or pasta, fruit and milk ...or
- Large bowl of cereal, fruit yogurt, toast, fruit

Reference: <http://oakville-soccer.on.ca/info/food.htm>

## Pre-Game Meal and Other Considerations

The face of nutrition changes almost daily. Fad diets and new research about foods and supplements are released to the public by scientists and pseudo-scientists every day. Nutritionists world wide agree on one thing, proper nutrition is a must for optimal athletic performance. Proper diet choices are difficult in today's fast food, eat-it-on-the-run society; athletes, however, must apply the same discipline to nutrition that they apply to their training habits.

Proper nutritional habits for athletes do not differ much from non-athletes. Athletes should consume 2,000 or more calories per day. The average non-athlete should consume no more than 2,000 calories per day to maintain body weight. Athletes need to consume more calories due to the caloric cost of training. For athletes these calories should come from complex carbohydrates (CHO), not fats, simple sugars, or alcohol. Athletes will require more fuel for their muscles; this translates into a higher CHO intake. Athletes will need to consume 60% or more of their calories from CHO, while non-athletes should not consume more than 60% of their calories from CHO. In terms of body weight, athletes should consume 3—5 grams of CHO per pound of body weight per day.

Complex CHO intake is accomplished by consuming grains (breads, pasta, rice, and whole grain cereals). An athlete should consume 6 to 11 servings per day from this energy supplying food group.

Fat consumption should be controlled, not eliminated. Fat ingestion is necessary for proper mental function, hair production, hormonal cycles, and finger and toe nail production, to mention a few. Fats should be unsaturated and from vegetable sources. Meat sources of fat contain high amounts of saturated fat. Saturated fat has been linked to cardiovascular disease. Good fat sources include olive oil, vegetable oil, and the omega-3 fatty acids found in ocean fish. Avoid fats from red meats (choose lean cuts of meat), fried food, and most fast food. Fast food (McDonalds®, Taco Bell®, etc.) is cheap largely due to the fact that it is high in fat. High fat foods are cheap to buy and the cost is passed along to the consumer, both in terms of dollars and the cost to your health.

There is a widely held myth that weight lifters and body builders need more protein in their diet; the truth is that long distance runners need to increase their protein consumption more than weight lifters. This myth addresses an important issue in nutrition; nutritional concerns need to be addressed not only to type of activity but body weight. Body builders weigh more, usually, than distance runners therefore, consume more protein in terms of serving size. Distance runners, weighing less than

weight lifters, will consume smaller portions however; the ration of grams of protein to body weight should be higher for runners.

An athlete should consume 0.5 to 0.75 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day. Runners should be in the high end of the recommendation due to the amount of protein wasting caused by long distance running.

Dairy sources need to be included in a well balanced diet. An athlete should consume 2 to 3 servings of this food group per day. Dairy foods, low fat milk, yogurt, and cheese, are important sources of calcium. Calcium is necessary for proper neural and muscle function. Females need to be certain to consume enough calcium to prevent osteoporosis. Preventing osteoporosis begins in adolescence, not late in adulthood.

The remaining food groups are just as important and often sacrificed in an athlete's diet. Fruit and vegetable consumption provide important vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals that we all need for proper nutrition. An athlete should consume 3 to 5 servings of vegetables and 2 to 4 servings of fruit per day. Remember that 12 ounces of juice can be substituted for a serving of that particular fruit or vegetable.

Athletes should also eat more meals per day than non-athletes. The standard "3 squares a day" will not provide enough energy during the day to promote optimal training and performance. It is recommended that athletes consume 6 meals a day. This provides the athlete with constantly replaced energy stores and eliminates the feeling of fullness that three large meals produce. Smaller amounts of food can be consumed before and after exercise to help with optimal performance.

Serving sizes also differ from food "portions." The following list is a basic indicator of food serving sizes in accordance with proper dietary recommendations.

Your fist or cupped hand = 1 Cup

A half-cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta is one serving. For raw leafy greens, such as lettuce, a serving is a cup. A cup of cooked or hopped raw vegetables or fruit equals 1 serving.

Your Thumb = 1 ounce of cheese

One thumb-size chunk of cheese equals approximately one ounce.

Your Thumb Tip = 1 teaspoon

A small portion of peanut butter, butter, mayonnaise, or swipe of brownie batter is high in fat calories. If the amount eaten matches the size of the last joint of the thumb, it equals one teaspoon. Three thumb sizes equal a tablespoon. The tip of your index finger is approximately half a teaspoon.

A handful = 1 or 2 ounces of snack foods

One handful equals 1 ounce of nuts or small candies. For chips and pretzels, 2 handfuls equal 1 ounce.

Your Palm = 3 ounces of meat

One serving of meat is only 2 to 3 ounces. Two 3 ounce low-fat servings of meat, fish, shellfish, or poultry or a single 6 ounce daily serving are recommended.

A tennis ball = 1 serving of fruit

## MEAL CHOICES

One of the most often asked questions concerning athletic nutrition is “When should and what should I eat prior to performance?” The answer to this is complex, but easily explained. The basics are as follows:

- Eat a large meal 4 to 6 hours prior to competition;
- Eat a smaller meal 2 to 3 hours prior to;
- Snack 1/2 to 1 hour prior to;
- Snack with in 1/2 hour post performance;
- Snack again 1 1/2 to 2 hours after performance, and
- Consume adequate fluids before, during and after performance.

The large meal should be rich in CHO choices, be “tried and true favorites,” psychologically comfortable and psychologically pleasing. Common choices are pasta with meat sauce, fruit and vegetable serving, fruit juices, and water. Other meal choices can include pancakes, lean turkey bacon, fresh fruit, fruit juice or low fat milk, and water.

The smaller meal 2 to 3 hours prior to competition should also be CHO rich. The choices may be the same but in smaller quantities. Good choices would be fresh fruits and vegetables, bagels, rice, yogurt. Again this meal is laying the energy foundation for performance.

The snack prior to competition should consist of fresh fruits and vegetables. This snack needs to be very low in fat (high fat contents at

this time significantly slow gastric emptying and “rob” the muscles of blood necessary for performance.)

Post exercise snacks are essential for replacing muscle energy stores that were lost during exercise. These energy stores are best replaced within the first 1/2 hour post training or performing. Therefore, a snack should be encouraged within 1/2 hour and again within 2 hours after training. Some athletes may have problems eating this soon after competition so merely encourage these individuals to consume small amounts of CHO over a longer period of time.

Fluid consumption prior to performance is very essential. Dehydration can compromise performance more than poor nutrition on game day. Proper hydration begins in the morning; an athlete must consume fluids during the day. Also remember that dehydration is cumulative, that is , poor rehydration builds over days of training. An athlete should consume fluids dictated below.

- Greater than 2 cups consumed 2 hours prior to performance,
- 2.5 cups 10 to 15 minutes prior,
- 1/2 to 3/4 cups every 15 minutes of performance,
- Post Exercise, consume 1 pint for every pound lost during performance.

Reference:

[http://www.athleticadvisor.com/Weight\\_Room/athletic\\_nutrition.htm](http://www.athleticadvisor.com/Weight_Room/athletic_nutrition.htm)

## Other Resources

- <http://www.sportsmedperformance.com/articles/fuel0405.html>
- [www.nal.usda.gov/fnic](http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic)
- [www.nutrition.org](http://www.nutrition.org)
- [www.ag.uiuc.edu/~food-lab/nat](http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~food-lab/nat)
- [www.fitness.gov](http://www.fitness.gov)
- [www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org)