



...because health matters!

Nutrition Matters

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Be Energized...Eating for Competing



There is no "magic food" that will help you feel stronger, train harder and compete better. However, every food you eat - in combination with when you eat - can affect your performance. Here are a few sports nutrition tips which may help you "eat to compete" whether at the baseball diamond, soccer field or dance class.

Early Morning Practice

Before those early morning practices, you should eat something that will digest easily and quickly. Try a muffin or toast. You should remember to drink cool water before practice because your body becomes dehydrated overnight. Breakfast after the practice is essential, to give you energy for your active morning ahead.

Pre-Event Eating Strategy

The timing and content of the pre-game and pre-practice meal is very important. Follow these simple guidelines:

- Schedule a meal 2-4 hours before the event.
- Include several high-carbohydrate foods from the Grains and Vegetable/Fruit groups, since they are easier to digest.
- Avoid or restrict foods high in fat like peanut butter, fried foods, mayonnaise, luncheon meats and chips. Fatty foods take longer to digest. This may lead to discomfort during the event or even pit stops!
- Skip the sweet desserts. They are often high in fat as well.
- Include 2-3 glasses of water or juice to keep the body well hydrated.

Pre-competition meals are only part of the athlete's total nutritional program. Making proper food choices **daily** is essential.

The Myth of "Quick Energy Foods"

The "quick energy" from a candy bar, soft drink or other concentrated sweet can actually harm rather than help athletic performance. When eaten within an hour of the game, these high-sugar foods activate insulin. The insulin causes the sugar in the blood to be removed too fast. The resulting low blood sugar can leave the athlete tired and weak.

Water - The Drink of Champions

Cool water is the most important nutrient for an athlete. During exercise, water is necessary for energy production. Limiting water or ignoring thirst can lead to heat cramps, exhaustion and heat stroke.



Thirst is **not** a good indicator of fluid needs. The thirst mechanism is actually dulled during and following exercise. Athletes should drink water before, during (every 10-15 minutes) and after exercise whether thirsty or not.



On the Road...Again

When travelling, you may have to search to find wholesome, high-carbohydrate, low-fat foods. Fast food restaurants which conveniently beckon to hungry travellers, can provide wise choices - if care is taken in selection.

Choose...	Instead of...
plain burger/grilled chicken	deluxe burger/fried chicken/fish sandwich
milk/juice	pop
salads (easy on dressing)	french fries/onion rings
yogurt cone	deep fried pies
vegetable, deep dish pizza	meat laden, thin crust pizza
pasta with tomato sauce	pasta with cream sauce

Tournament Tips

During tournaments you compete several times in one day. To keep your energy at its peak, choose high-carbohydrate snacks such as:

- fresh and dried fruit
- pretzels/crackers
- individually boxes cereals
- bagels/fruit bread
- plain cookies (fig newtons, graham wafers)
- fresh veggies
- juice and milk
- individual pudding/fruit cups

Watch out for the snack booths. Their snacks are usually too high in fat and sugar.

The first fifteen minutes after each event is the best time for you to replenish your energy stores. High carbohydrate food/drinks such as those listed above should be available. You want to guarantee enough fuel for the remaining matches.

So... good nutrition can make a difference, for that last minute surge of energy to score the winning goal, run that extra mile or dance those extra steps.

