



...because health matters!

Nutrition Matters

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Eat To Compete - "Pre-Competition Meals"



When and what to eat prior to the big event is often discussed amongst athletes. What an athlete eats on the day of competition has little to do with the production of energy for that day. Enjoy healthy eating throughout the training season and during the days prior to the competition. However, it does make sense for an athlete to pay attention to some pre-event eating guidelines in order to perform at his/her best.

Generally the Pre-Event Meal:

1) Allows the stomach to be empty by the start of the competition.

The meal should be eaten 1 to 4 hours prior to the competition to allow for complete digestion depending on the size of the meal.

2) Prevents feelings of hunger or weakness during competition.

Meals high in carbohydrates and lower in fat and protein provide an easily digestible meal at a time when the athlete may be tense and/or nervous.

3) Does not adversely affect body energy.

Large amounts of simple carbohydrate such as candy, sugar and honey should be avoided within an hour of competition. Simple carbohydrate can cause a rapid

rise in blood sugar resulting in an insulin response that will quickly remove the sugar from the blood stream. This action can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) which may produce symptoms of weakness and fatigue.

4) Provides enough fluids

Coffee, colas and tea increase body water loss because they promote urination. Large amounts of protein also increase the water output of the kidney. Fluids are important prior to, during and after an event especially if it will be a long event in hot weather.

5) Includes food the athlete enjoys and thinks will make him or her win.

Athletes should remember that what they eat can be as important psychologically as physiologically.

WHAT TO EAT & DRINK RIGHT BEFORE YOU COMPETE

- High carbohydrate, lower fat foods are the best choice. These foods are digested relatively quickly and can be stored in the muscles as glycogen, a readily available source of energy. Make delicious choices from this list of foods from Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

Grain Products



Bagel Pasta Breakfast Cereal
Pita Bread Rice Banana Bread
Oatmeal Hard Roll English Muffin
Raisin Bran Fig Newtons
Graham Crackers Whole Wheat Bread

Vegetables & Fruit



Apples Peas Pears
Bananas Raisins Potatoes (baked,
Corn Oranges (boiled, or
Grapes Sweet Potatoes mashed)

Milk Products

Lower fat chocolate milk Ice milk 
Lower fat frozen yogurt Lower fat milk
Lower fat yogurt

Meat & Alternatives



Leaner meat, fish and poultry prepared with little or no fat.
Refried beans, baked beans or split pea soup if tolerated.

Before competition avoid:

- Higher-fat foods like hamburger, sausage, luncheon meats and peanut butter.
- Fried foods like doughnuts, chips, french fries, and fried fish or chicken.
- Fats like mayonnaise and salad dressings.

Because these foods are higher in fat, they take the longest time to pass through the stomach. Foods that remain in the stomach during competition may cause indigestion, nausea, and even vomiting. If you include any of these foods in your pre-competition meal, eat them in small amounts.

SOME SAMPLE PRE-COMPETITION MEALS

These sample pre-competition meals include plenty of high-carbohydrate foods. Use these menus when planning your own pre-competition meals.

Sample Meal #1: Orange juice, cornflakes with a sliced banana, whole wheat toast with jelly, and skim milk.

Sample Meal #2: Vegetable soup, lean roast beef sandwich on whole wheat bread, applesauce, and lower fat strawberry yogurt.

Sample Meal #3: Julienne salad (lettuce and other fresh vegetables with thin strips of cheese and turkey), a hard roll, frozen yogurt, and grape juice.

Sample Meal #4: (Fast Food Choice): Plain burger, salad, yogurt cone.

Drink plenty of cool fluids before, during, and after practice and competition. Even if you don't feel thirsty:

- Drink $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fluid 2 to 3 hours before exercise.
- Drink 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of cool fluid 15 minutes before competition or practice.
- Drink $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fluid every 15-20 minutes during the event.
- Avoid soft drinks, coffee, tea, and alcohol.
- Your best choice is water or diluted unsweetened fruit juices.

DRINK BEYOND THIRST - exercise dulls the thirst mechanism

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