

Fueling for Competition Day

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Knowing the right foods to eat, and the right time to eat them, can make all the difference of becoming a champion or not. Whether it is remaining strong and focused through the last period, the last quarter or the last match, athletes need to provide their bodies with the proper nutrition in advance of competition.

CARBOHYDRATES – THE FUEL FOR WORKING MUSCLES

During activity, your body relies on stored energy to fuel your working muscles and movements. Much of that energy comes from muscle glycogen – the form of carbohydrates that are stored in your muscles. To make sure your body has enough muscle glycogen to use during activity, it's important to include carbohydrate rich foods in your daily eating plan. Those carbohydrates can be found in a variety of foods, including grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy foods such as milk and yogurt, and other naturally occurring sugars in foods and beverages.

TIMING, TYPE AND QUANTITY OF FOOD

Eating before competing can be a challenge for many athletes. It's common for nerves to be high, which can get in the way of normal hunger cues. Taking the time to plan and schedule your meal is key to fueling your muscles right. The exact time, type and quantity of food you eat before competition depends on how much time you have.

The closer it is to go time, the less food you should eat. Less time also means choosing foods that are easier to digest. Certain nutrients – such as fiber, fat and protein – remain in the stomach longer than simpler forms of carbohydrate. If you eat those foods too close to competition, they might not have enough time to digest, and that could leave you with an upset stomach or other gastrointestinal issues.

Andrea's Tip:

Be sure to eat familiar foods on game day! Practice your fueling strategies on training days, so that you know how your body feels when you eat those certain foods. Nothing new on game/meet day!



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If you have more time until competition, you have more leeway on what to eat. A meal consumed four or more hours before competition has plenty of time to digest – assuming you ate the right foods. Be sure to build a balanced meal comprised of complex carbohydrate, moderate protein and healthy fats. Below are some examples of balanced pre-competition meals based on timing:

THE NIGHT BEFORE COMPETITION

- Grilled chicken with barbeque sauce, corn on the cob, tomato and cucumber salad, whole grain roll with butter and a cup of frozen yogurt
- Angel hair pasta with pesto sauce and shrimp topped with grated parmesan cheese and served with broccoli and a cup of sorbet
- Pork Tenderloin, baked sweet potato, cauliflower with melted cheddar cheese and a side of applesauce.
- Broiled salmon, wild rice, snap peas, baked apple and a cup of milk.
- Chicken and vegetable stir fry with assorted vegetables with brown rice and chocolate pudding

3-4-HOURS before competition

- Greek yogurt topped with granola and dried cranberries
- English muffin with peanut butter, large banana and 12 oz. low-fat Chocolate milk
- Cup of oatmeal prepared with low fat milk, then topped with walnuts and raisins with 8 oz. orange juice
- Toaster waffles with maple syrup served with a side of cottage cheese and blueberries
- Scrambled eggs, cheddar cheese and mild salsa wrapped in a flour tortilla, served with a side of melon and small apple juice

1-2 HOUR before competition

- Cup of low-fat flavored yogurt
- Bowl of low-fiber cereal with low-fat milk
- 1 cup noodles topped with grated parmesan cheese
- Mini-bagel and jam and cream cheese
- Homemade yogurt and fruit smoothie

15-20 MINUTES before competition

- ½ cup of applesauce
- Slice of toast & jam
- Small handful of raisins
- Wedge of cantaloupe
- 7-10 pretzels
- Sports drink



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