



Why Try?

You've worked so hard in practice. Now it's time to show your stuff in competition!

Here's the Deal

Consistently fueling your body with the right foods and fluids before training and competition increases your muscle energy stores. Having more energy "on board" means you can go harder and longer without running out of fuel, which equals better performance.

Get in the Know

→ Following a well-designed competition day nutrition plan can give you a big-time edge over your opponents.

Pre-competition meal

The ideal pre-competition meal takes place about 3-4 hours prior to the start of your game, meet, or match. Your pre-competition meal should be slightly smaller than a regular meal; overeating and undereating can both have negative effects. Be sure to select foods that taste good to you and you are familiar with eating.

Components of an optimal pre-competition meal are:

1. Medium serving of lean protein
2. Big serving of starchy carbs
3. Colorful fruits or veggies (avoid salads and raw veggies)
4. Salty foods or added salt
5. Plenty of caffeine-free fluids

The chart below includes examples of pre-competition meals to eat at breakfast, lunch, or dinner.

PRE-COMPETITION MEAL IDEAS

Breakfast Ideas

Larger portions of:

- Cold cereals
- Hot cereals like oatmeal or grits
- Cereal bars and granola bars
- Pancakes and waffles
- Toast, English muffins, bagels
- Low-fat muffins
- Tortillas
- Fruit and fruit juice
- Non-fat or low-fat milk and yogurt
- Non-fat and low-fat soy milk and soy yogurt
- Low-fat sausage or soy/veggie sausage
- Smoothies
- Sports drinks
- Energy bars and gels

Smaller portions of:

- Poached, boiled, or scrambled eggs
- Lean ham, turkey, or chicken
- Low-fat sausage or soy sausage
- Low-fat bacon, turkey bacon, or veggie bacon
- Nuts or peanut butter

Lunch & Dinner Ideas

Larger portions of:

- Spaghetti and red sauce
- Low-fat macaroni and cheese
- Vegetable and chicken noodle soups
- Potatoes, sweet potatoes, and rice
- Breads, bagels, pitas, and tortillas
- Fruits and fruit juices
- Non-fat and low-fat milk and yogurt
- Non-fat and low-fat soy milk and soy yogurt
- Non-fat and low-fat ice milk, frozen yogurt, and pudding
- Low-fat (e.g. mozzarella) cheese sticks
- Frozen fruit bars
- Smoothies
- Sports drinks
- Energy bars and gels

Smaller portions of:

- Lean chicken, turkey, beef, pork, and fish
- Other protein sources such as tofu, veggie burgers, soy nuggets, nuts, and peanut butter

INSIDE SCOOP

Before competition

Don't forget that your pre-training meal may be just as important as your pre-competition meal, so take these recommendations to practice sessions as well!

Avoid:

- fried foods
- high-fat meats
- creamy, sauces, soups, & gravies
- creamy dressings (e.g. ranch or mayonnaise)
- biscuits
- spicy foods
- entrée salads
- cakes, pies, regular ice cream
- sugary cereals
- soda
- whole milk
- foods you have never tried before!

Top-off fuel

About 30-60 minutes prior to the start of competition, make sure your fuel stores are "topped off" by consuming about 30 grams of carbs. Examples: 2 cups of sports drink (such as Gatorade® or Powerade®), an 8–10 ounce juice box, 1 piece of fruit, a granola bar, ½ bagel, or some fruit snacks. Be sure to have plenty of fluids, too.

During exercise and competition

Most athletes burn about 30–60 grams of carbohydrates during every hour of hard exercise. Train your body to take in sports drinks, gels, or snacks during long (60 minutes plus), continuous exercise or have snacks such as fruit, pretzels, cereal, fruit snacks, granola bars, and water/sports drinks available at half-time.

TIMEOUT

What if I don't have 3 or 4 hours before I compete?

Eating closer to competition is okay, too. Use the following guidelines:

Time Prior to Competition	Recommended Food or Liquids
1–2 hours	Small snack and liquids
2–3 hours	Small meal and liquids
3–4 hours	Moderate-size meal and liquids

AND make sure you eat well the night before competition!

Between events

If you are playing in a tournament or have more than one competition in the same day, be prepared to fuel and hydrate your body between events.

LESS THAN 1 HOUR

If you have < 1 hour between events, drink at least 8 ounces of fluids and have a high-carbohydrate snack.

Examples: Water or sports drink plus bagels, graham crackers, fig bars, saltines, grapes, berries, apple slices, bananas, or fruit juice.

MORE THAN 1 HOUR

If you have > 1 hour between events, drink at least 12 ounces of fluids and have a carbohydrate/protein snack.

Examples: ½ peanut butter and jelly sandwich, bagel with cheese, peanut butter crackers, trail mix, yogurt with cereal, or a sports bar.

Bottom Line

- Plan a nutritionally sound pre-competition meal before you play. If solid foods bother your stomach, use liquids such as smoothies, meal replacement drinks, breakfast shakes, or chocolate milk.
- Have a top-off snack 30-60 minutes before beginning competition.
- If your competition lasts longer than 1 hour, take in carbs and fluids during exercise.
- Plan ahead on tournament or multiple-event days to have plenty of fluids and fuel with you!

This handout was designed by Sports Dietitians Michelle Rockwell, MS, RD, CSSD and Susan Kundrat, MS, RD, CSSD to provide general education. For specific concerns, refer to your sports medicine team.