

Eating for Competition

No I am not referencing the competitive eating 'sport'. Do NOT eat a bazillion hot dogs and call yourself an athlete. Call yourself an ambulance. Anyway, a few years ago I sat down with a grad student studying nutrition specifically for athletes and below is the result of our conversation:

What to eat guidelines:

All season: Multivitamin (age appropriate) if they are still taking Flintstones, take two plus an extra calcium supplement. If they would rather have single vitamins/supplements focus on B-12 complex, Fish oils, Magnesium and Glucosamine and Vitamin C. As always consult a physician for a tailored supplement plan.

Note: if you are not taking supplements right now, Magnesium is excellent before a meet. It gives you that extra boost of energy/ "conquer the world" feeling.

Absolutely no fad diets- maintain or increase the amount of calories you consume. You will notice your eating patterns change the minute you increase your metabolic rate.

Week of Meet:

-No adventurous foods! Stick with the normal everyday diet. Avoid meals that are high in sodium. Avoid high quantities of snacks with modified sugars (laxatives)

-Concentrate on mood balancing foods: salmon, nuts, olive oil, green vegetables, brown rice, whole grain breads, pasta, any berries or dark skinned fruits, bananas, avocados.

-Eat Nightshade plants in moderation: eggplant, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes

Hours before Meet: (you know your body, eat where, when and however you want as long as you won't feel bloated before the meet-sneak in some happy foods please!)

After the Meal: Stick to water and fortified sports drinks-avoid diet or caffeinated beverages as they dehydrate.

-Eat warm proteins (roasted poultry, beef, and beans/rice)-warm proteins break down easier and provide fuel for muscles.

-Sensory Therapy: If you have a favorite scent, sensation or meditative ritual-do it. Some people mistake hunger for nerves.

-Try not to snack between big meals and arriving on deck.

-Stay warm and relaxed. Try to stay out of extreme elements as this throws off your body temperature/metabolism.

Deck Foods: If you get hungry during the meet stick foods that are easy to digest: Fruit (apples, bananas, oranges, raisins, pears) power bars, pretzels, string cheese, peanut butter sandwich, low-fat pudding and granola/cereal bars. Don't go overboard! Try to keep your deck snack under 150-300 calories before you swim. Eat combinations of sugars and proteins to effectively eat. (Apples with peanut butter, string cheese and pretzels, trail mix)

After the meet: More warm protein...keep the meals moderate...happy foods....

After a hard/emotional work out or meet resist the urge to eat high sodium, high sugar foods throw off the endorphins in your brain.