

Pre-Competition Meals for Athletes

GENERAL INFORMATION:

What is a pre-competition meal? A pre-competition (kom-pe-TI-shun) meal provides the nutrients (NOO-tre-ents) and fluid you need to complete an athletic (ath-let-TIK) competition (event). The goal of a pre-competition meal is to give you energy during the competition. The pre-competition meal should also keep you from feeling hungry during the competition. It also provides you with extra liquids. Eating a pre-competition meal will help you to perform better than you would on an empty stomach.

When should I eat a pre-competition meal? Eat a large meal at least three to four hours before a competition to digest (break down) the food for your body to use. If you cannot eat your meal three to four hours before the competition, eat a lighter meal or snack. The amount of time it takes for your body to digest food is as follows:

- Three to four hours to digest a large meal.
- Two to three hours to digest a smaller meal.
- One to two hours to digest a blended or liquid food.
- Less than one hour to digest a small snack.

What should I eat and drink for a pre-competition meal? It is important to eat foods that you like and that you usually eat. Eating new foods may cause stomach problems such as diarrhea (loose bowel movements) or stomach cramps. Generally, your pre-competition meal should be high in carbohydrates (kahr-boh-HEYE-drayts) and fluids. Carbohydrates are breads and bread products, rice, pasta, and some vegetables. Your meal should also be low in fat and protein. Foods that are high in fat or protein take longer to digest than carbohydrate foods. It may take between five to six hours to digest a meal that is high in fat and protein.

How much carbohydrate should I include in my pre-competition meal?

- **If your pre-competition meal is four hours before your event, eat four grams of carbohydrate for each kilogram of your weight.** To figure out your weight in kilograms, divide your weight in pounds by 2.2. To figure out how many grams of carbohydrate you should have, multiply your weight in kg by 4. For example, if you weigh 130 pounds, your weight in kilograms is 59. By multiplying 59 by 4, you would need about 236 grams of carbohydrate in your pre-competition meal.
- **If your pre-competition meal is two to three hours before an exercise event, eat less carbohydrate.** You should eat two to three grams of carbohydrate for each kilogram of your weight. If you weigh 70 kilograms, you should eat 140 to 210 grams of carbohydrate.
- **If your pre-competition meal is one hour before your exercise event, eat one gram of carbohydrate for each kilogram of your body weight.** If you weigh 70 kilograms, you should eat 70 grams of carbohydrate.

What healthy sources of carbohydrate should I eat? The following foods have about 30

grams of carbohydrate in the amounts listed:

- One-half of a bagel.
- Two slices of bread.
- Two-thirds of a cup of rice.
- One cup of cooked pasta.
- One-half of a large baked potato, or one cup of mashed potatoes.
- One and one-half cups of dry, unsweetened cereal.
- One cup of oatmeal.
- Six graham cracker squares.
- One and one-half ounces of pretzels.
- Two flour tortillas (6 inch).
- One large banana.
- One cup of applesauce.
- One large pear.
- One cup of canned fruit.
- One cup of apple, grapefruit, pineapple or orange juice.
- Six to fifteen ounces of a sports drink (different brands have different amounts of carbohydrate).
- One energy bar (different brands have different amounts of carbohydrate).

What should I avoid eating or drinking for my pre-competition meal?

- Avoid eating high fat foods such as potato chips, French fries, hot dogs, candy bars and doughnuts. These foods will take longer to digest and may cause stomach discomfort. They may not provide you with enough energy during the competition.
- Avoid drinking carbonated beverages (such as soda), because they may cause stomach discomfort during the competition.
- Avoid eating high fiber foods (such as bran muffins) because they may cause gas and stomach discomfort during the competition.

How much liquid should I drink?

- Drinking enough liquids before, during, and after exercise is important to prevent

dehydration (dee-heye-DRAY-shen) Dehydration is a condition that happens when you do not drink enough water or you lose too much body water. Dehydration can force you to stop your activity, cause serious health problems, and even cause death.

- Some examples of fluids that you can drink three to four hours before your competition include water, sports drinks or juice. During competition, drink water and sports drinks. For competitions that last longer than one hour, be sure to drink liquids that contain carbohydrate, such as sports drinks. Below are some guidelines for drinking the right amount of fluids.
 - Drink at least eight to 16 ounces (one to two cups) of liquid, two or three hours before the competition.
 - Drink eight to 16 ounces (one to two cups) of liquid, 30 minutes before the competition.
 - Drink at least four to eight ounces (one-half to one cup) of liquid, right before the competition.
 - Drink at least 20-48 ounces (four and one-half cups to six cups) of liquid, every hour during the competition.
- You may want to weigh yourself before and after the event. Drink at least eight to 24 ounces (one to three cups) of liquid for every pound lost during the competition.

What other diet guidelines should I follow? It is important to eat a healthy diet every day. Eating a healthy pre-competition meal may not give you all of the energy you need during your competition. You will need to have good carbohydrate stores to have enough energy during the competition. You can have good carbohydrate stores by eating the right amount of carbohydrate during your meals each day. Ask your caregiver for more information about the amount of carbohydrate and other nutrients that are right for you.

Risks Not eating the right pre-competition meal before an athletic competition can affect your performance. Not eating the right amount of carbohydrate can lower your energy during the competition. Eating the wrong type of foods for your pre-competition meal may cause problems such as stomach discomfort. Not drinking enough liquids before and during a competition may cause dehydration.

CARE AGREEMENT:

You have the right to help plan your care. To help with this plan, you must learn about your diet. You can then discuss treatment options with your caregivers. Work with them to decide what care may be used to treat you. You always have the right to refuse treatment.

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