Lake Forest HEALTH & FITNESS INSTITUTE

Competition Eating

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Objectives:

1. Prevent hypoglycemia (lightheadedness, fatigue, etc)
2. Help settle stomach, absorb gastric juices, prevent hunger feelings
3. Refuel muscle energy stores (glycogen), if consumed early enough to allow digestion (2-4 hours)

Athletes with nervous stomachs may not be able to eat prior to competition and must prepare by eating extra food the day before to be well fueled for the competition. Blender meals are usually more easily digested such as fruit smoothie with cereal added into the mix. This could include instant breakfast type meals as well.

What types of food?

1. Carbohydrates are best because they are digested quickly and readily available as fuel. (buns, bagels, cereals, fruits, fruit juices, pretzels, popsicles, potatoes, pasta, graham crackers, oyster crackers, sport drinks, some cereal and sport bars)
2. Protein foods take longer to digest and may increase need to urinate. (eggs, turkey, tuna, steak)
3. Fats take the longest to digest and may remain in the stomach resulting in a heavy feeling. (fried foods, mayonnaise, greasy hamburgers, peanut butter)

Digestion Times

Regular-type meal	3-4 hours
Small meal	2-3 hours
Blender-type meal	1-2 hours

Special Considerations

Double headers or all day events:

Wholesome carbohydrates (not too sugary — no candy) every 1½ hours. This could be sports drinks, banana, applesauce, bagels, low fat sports or cereal bars or pretzels. Lunch should be quite light — sandwich with 2 oz of meat (no mayo), fruit, sports drinks, pasta with tomato sauce.

Hydration must be maintained all day.

The Rule of 2's — 2 cups of water 2 hours before and 2 hours after your event. In addition, for endurance or longer-lasting events, take in 3-4 oz of water or sports drink every 45 minutes. Drink past the point of satisfying thirst.

Refueling after the competition:

Essential for the athlete in training. It is best if the refueling occurs within two hours after the event. Emphasis again should be on carbohydrates to replenish the muscle energy storage (glycogen) with a small amount of protein to facilitate the uptake and storage. Sport drinks or juices are a good start. Again, the pastas are good as replacements, pancake dinners, soups, sandwiches with less meat (3-4 oz not 5-6!), etc. Chicken breasts with generous sides of rice, pasta, potatoes, rolls and biscuits, etc.

Meal timing essential

Morning events — have a high carbohydrate dinner and bedtime snack. In the morning have a light snack (1-2 pieces of toast, or small cereal with milk)

Afternoon events — have a hearty high carbohydrate breakfast and snack or light lunch (1-2 hours prior). A substantial high carbohydrate brunch about 4 hours prior will also work.

Evening events — eat a hearty high carbohydrate breakfast and lunch and light snack (1-2 hours prior as needed)

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What Foods Do I Eat?

Breakfast:
- French toast or pancakes with syrup, no butter
- cereal + milk + fruit
- yogurt + fruit
- bagel or toast
- Juice
- fruit smoothies made with low-fat yogurt or milk and frozen fruit or fresh fruit + ice

Lunch:
- sandwiches (no mayo and light on the meat [2 oz])
- soup + crackers
- 1 slice thick crust cheese-only pizza
- fruit juices
- applesauce

Snack:
- crackers (less than 4 gms of fat per cracker serving)
- Bagel
- Toast (jelly - no butter)
- canned peaches or applesauce
- Yogurt
- banana bread
- small sandwich (1 oz meat)

Dinner:
- spaghetti & tomato sauce
- lots of rice, noodles, potato (not fried)
- vegetables with small serving of chicken and fish

Nutrition Myths

Salt

Fiction — If I sweat, I need to replace the sodium in my body with a sports drink.

Fact — endurance athletes and those who lose 5-7 pounds in sweat are the only athletes who truly benefit from the minerals in the sport drinks. If the craving for salty food is there, satisfy it. Sweat loss can also reduce your potassium so eat foods rich in potassium (OJ, bananas, raisins, dried apricots).

Vitamins

Fiction — Vitamins give you energy and stamina.

Fact — Vitamins contain no energy but function as "helpers" in the body's metabolic functions. If the daily intake includes a variety of foods from the five food groups and calorie consumption is adequate, additional vitamins are unnecessary. If an adolescent diet seems questionable, a once daily vitamin would offer sufficient protection to the average athlete.

Protein

Fiction — Weightlifters and other athletes need a lot of protein to build muscle.

Fact — An athlete does need slightly more protein (daily average of 8 oz vs. 6 oz). Most Americans consume far more protein than is needed and the extra is converted to be used for energy or stored as fat. To build muscles, additional carbohydrate is needed to give the muscles the energy to complete the work necessary to increase muscle mass.

Milk

Fiction — Milk causes cotton mouth and is hard to digest with resultant cramping.

Fact — Cotton mouth is caused by nervousness and anxiety. Low-fat (<1 %) milk and dairy products tend to digest easily and are a nice blend of carbohydrate and a little protein.