

Timing of Meals IN-Season Versus OFF-Season

It is important to taper or decrease food intake during the off-season since you are not exercising as much.

An IN-season daily eating plan may look like this:

	3400 calories
Milk:	4 cups or more
Meat & Beans:	8 ounces or more
Vegetables:	4 cups or more
Fruits:	3 cups or more
Grains:	12 ounces or more

An OFF-season daily eating plan may look like this:

	2800 calories
Milk:	3 cups
Meat & Beans:	7 ounces
Vegetables:	3½ cups
Fruits:	2½ cups
Grains:	10 ounces

**Focus on carbohydrates and fluids
for your pre-event meal**

The Pre-Competition Meal

Eating before exercise is necessary to prevent hunger before and during the event. This meal helps you stay physically comfortable and mentally alert.

The timing of the last meal before competition will depend on the duration, intensity and type of event. Experiment with the timing of your meals during training, not before competition. The closer your event draws, the less you should eat. A good rule of thumb is to have your last meal two to four hours before exercise. You want to start most events with an empty stomach but do not want to feel hungry or weak. Food choices should focus on carbohydrates and fluids.



**Have your last meal
2 to 4 hours before exercise**



Here are some sample pre-competition meals:

Breakfast

oatmeal, milk, English muffin and peanut butter with grape juice
OR...
pancakes with yogurt and fruit and chocolate milk

Lunch

broiled chicken sandwich with lettuce and tomato, green salad, fig bars and milk
OR...
roast beef sandwich with lettuce and tomato, apple, carrot sticks and milk

Dinner

tostada (tortilla, lettuce, tomato, beef, onions, beans, salsa and cheese), orange, milk and frozen yogurt
OR...
spaghetti with tomato sauce, bread sticks, green salad, pear and milk

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Eating During Competition

Whether you're training or competing, it's important to refuel your body during extended endurance activities — those lasting 30 minutes or longer. Endurance activities deplete your muscles' carbohydrate stores. Keep your muscles charged and your energy levels up with low-fat sources of carbohydrate during your event. Eat every 30 to 60 minutes. Some examples of foods to try are:

- Sports drinks
- Energy bars
- Fresh fruit, breads and cereals
- Energy gels

Your body doesn't care if the carbohydrate comes in solid or liquid form. Both supply your body with energy equally. However, if you are competing in events lasting several hours, solid food will stave off hunger. Remember to drink plenty of fluid along with solid food. For many athletes, a combination of solid and liquid, such as a banana and sports drink, works well.

Learn which combinations will work best for you by experimenting with different drinks and foods during training. Don't wait until competition day to try something new.

By keeping carbohydrate content high and fat content low, your energy levels will remain high.

Eating Between Events and Heats

Two-a-day practices or competing in several events or heats in one day (tennis or wrestling tournaments, swim meets, or several basketball or soccer games in one day) can present nutritional challenges. Giving your body the nutrients it needs, maintaining energy stores and staying hydrated are critical to performance. However, some athletes may not have time or feel like eating between events.

The amount of time between events or heats will determine the amount and type of food you eat. Make sure water and sports drinks are always available. The longer you have between competitions, the more you can eat since there is more time to digest food. Use the following tips to guide your choices:

If there is one hour or less between events or heats, stick with fluids or high carbohydrate foods, if tolerated, such as:

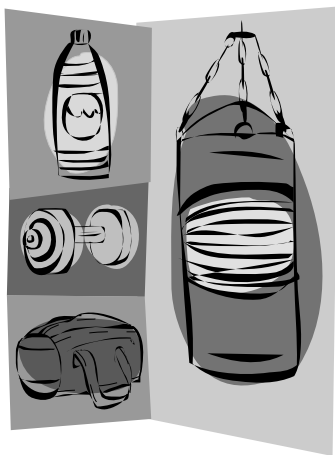
- Sports drinks
- Fruit
- Whole grain toast or bagel
- Energy bar
- Graham crackers
- Pudding cup

For one- to three-hour breaks, try high carbohydrate foods with some lean protein such as:

- Bowl of cereal with low-fat milk
- A handful of grapes with fruit-flavored yogurt
- Peanut butter and crackers
- Energy bar and juice

For longer breaks (three or more hours), regular high carbohydrate meals are often well-tolerated. Examples include:

- Pancakes topped with berries, scrambled eggs, and juice
- Turkey or ham and cheese sandwich, baby carrots and low-fat milk
- Vegetable pizza with a mixed green salad
- Peanut butter sandwich on whole grain bread, apple and chocolate milk



? Ask the Sports Dietitian

- Q:** *Will eating more fat increase my body's ability to use fat as energy during exercise?*
- A:** Absolutely not. There is no convincing evidence that high-fat diets increase the body's ability to use fat as an energy source. In fact, the opposite is true. Eating too much fat leaves less room for eating carbohydrates which means you will not have enough energy to exercise at higher intensities.
- Q:** *Will a sports drink enhance my performance?*
- A:** For exercise lasting 30 minutes or longer sports drinks may be beneficial. They contain carbohydrate, which provides energy to your muscles and delays fatigue. For activity lasting less than 30 minutes water is the expert's choice. At meals choose nutrient-rich fluids such as milk or juice.

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