

## Fuelling up for Competition

The meal before your game is crucial for ensuring that your body's energy stores are optimal. Optimal energy stores are important for delaying muscular fatigue and also fuelling your brain during your game. Hence the choices that you make for this meal have a major impact on your performance.

The pre-match meal should:

- ✓ Be enjoyable and familiar to you. You will need to experiment with different types of meals during your normal training week until you find a meal that you feel comfortable with using prior to your games.
- ✓ Provide 1-4grams of carbohydrate per kg body weight (e.g. a 60kg athlete will need to choose a meal that provides 60-240g of carbohydrates for their pre-game meal. To be able to perform to your potential it is essential that your body has adequate carbohydrate stores to provide ample energy throughout your event. When you eat a carbohydrate-containing meal you are topping up your muscle and liver glycogen stores. Higher glycogen stores will enhance your physical and mental capacity during your event. If you are competing in a prolonged event or in more than one session per day your consumption of adequate carbohydrate to top up your glycogen stores throughout the day will become even more crucial for your performance. Carbohydrates are the number one source of energy for athletes.
- ✓ Be eaten 1-4 hours prior to the start of your game. Experiment with the timing of the pre-exercise meal in your training week until you find out what time you need to eat that meal to prevent stomach discomfort, bloating, excessive fullness or hunger.
- ✓ Be a liquid meal (e.g. a Sustagen or fruit smoothie) if you are prone to nausea or become very nervous prior to your matches and therefore can't handle a proper meal.
- ✓ Contain mainly carbohydrates (ideally the low Glycaemic Index types), some protein and very little fat or fibre.
- ✓ Be accompanied by sips of fluid throughout the period leading up to the game. Your urine should be clear prior to the start of the game. Brightly coloured urine is a sign of dehydration, which can impair your performance by worsening concentration, co-ordination, fatigue and nausea.
- ✓ Steer clear of foods that cause you to feel bloated, too full or unsatisfied, or that you haven't experimented with before. Foods that cause gastrointestinal problems for some athletes include legumes (beans & lentils), spicy foods, excessive quantities of fruits or vegetables and fatty foods.

The following ideas are all appropriate choices for your pre-match meal. If you experiment to find out the best types and timing for you, and practice preparing these meals, you will have an extra edge over your opponents. Best of luck!!!

- ✓ Cereal (e.g. rolled oats, Guardian or Special K) with skim milk & fruit or yoghurt
- ✓ Raisin toast with honey, & a glass of Sustagen

- ✓ Wholegrain toast with low fat cheese & tomato
- ✓ Baked beans or boiled eggs on wholegrain toast
- ✓ Creamed rice (low fat) with tinned fruit
- ✓ Pasta with low fat tomato-based sauce & low fat cheese or lean meat
- ✓ Low fat sports bar or breakfast bar & a milk-based drink (e.g. Sustagen or Milo)
- ✓ Smoothie (skim milk, low fat yoghurt & banana, mango or berries)
- ✓ Wholegrain breadroll with lean meat or tinned fish & some salad

Lower fibre pre-event meal suggestions- for those who have gastrointestinal problems or suffer nervousness before games:

- ✓ Liquid sports supplement (E.g. Sustagen Sport)
- ✓ Sports drink (E.g. Gatorade)
- ✓ A mandarin, orange, banana or peeled apple with low fat fruit yoghurt
- ✓ English muffin with honey
- ✓ Jelly with tinned fruit
- ✓ Low fat creamed rice
- ✓ Plain pasta with commercial tomato-based sauce
- ✓ White toast with banana & honey

For more information feel free to contact me or check out [www.sportsdietitians.com.au](http://www.sportsdietitians.com.au).



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