



Fort Worth Flyers Track Club Pre-Competition Nutritional Guide

The pre-competition, or pre-exercise meal, can be an important factor in an athlete's sports performance. The pre-competition meal plays a role in maintaining normal blood sugar to prevent performance problems associated with hypoglycemia such as light headedness, blurred vision, needless fatigue and indecisiveness. The goal of the pre-competition meal is to settle an athlete's stomach by absorbing some of the gastric juices and to prevent an athlete from feeling hungry. One of the most important purposes of the pre-competition meal is to provide energy to fuel the athlete's muscles! Below, are answers to common questions concerning the pre-competition meal.

1. What do you recommend eating before a game?

Athletes should fill 2/3 of their plate with high carbohydrate options, and the remaining 1/3 with a lean protein. Athletes want to choose carbohydrates before an event because they digest quickly and are readily available for fuel. Foods such as cereals, bananas, breads, bagels, crackers, rice or pastas would be a good choice. Lean proteins include grilled chicken, turkey, and fish.

2. What time of day is it good to eat a pre-game meal?

The timing of the pre-game meal can be different for each athlete based on what and how much the athlete is eating. However, these are the guidelines for the timing of a pre-game meal:

Large meal (over 600 calories) - 3-5 hours pre-event

Small meal (300-500 calories) - 2-3 hours pre-event

Blenderized meal (300-500 calories) - 1-2 hours pre-event

Small Snack (50-200 calories) - 1/2 - 1 hour pre-event

Athletes need to practice the above timing of meals to learn what is comfortable, and the right amount of fuel for the workouts that will settle well.

3. How important is drinking water?

Drinking water is important to prevent dehydration which can cause fatigue, heat illness and reduced performance. Athletes should be drinking at least 10-12 cups of fluid per day. It's important to drink fluids (about 16 oz. 30-60 minutes) before exercise to ensure adequate hydration. A sports-drink such as Gatorade or Powerade also provides a quick source of energy and electrolytes, and can also promote increased fluid intake.



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4. What are some of the negative effects to not eating appropriately before a competition?

A meal that is high in fat and protein rich foods and low in carbohydrates right before the competition may feel heavy and uncomfortable in the stomach because fat and protein take longer to digest than carbohydrates. Also, protein is not a primary fuel source, so it will not provide readily available fuel for the competition. If an athlete does not eat an adequate pre-game meal, the athlete may not be able to maintain normal blood sugar. A low blood sugar is associated with performance problems such as light-headedness, blurred vision, needless fatigue and indecisiveness. For some athletes, competing on an empty stomach means feeling hungry and having an unsettled stomach during competition, this can be a huge distraction! Athletes should be cautious with sugary foods (soft drinks, candy, lots of maple syrup, gels) within 15-120 minutes of competition or practice. Some athletes will experience a drop in blood sugars that can leave them feeling tired, light-headed and fatigued after eating sugary foods. An athlete may want to experiment with eating sugary foods before training sessions to learn how the body responds. Also, an athlete should always eat familiar foods the day of competition. New foods always carry the risk of settling poorly, causing intestinal discomfort, acid stomach, heartburn, or cramps.

5. What are some examples of high-carbohydrate, low-fat pre-competition foods?

Breakfast	Lunch	Snacks	Dinner
-Cereal, low-fat milk, banana -Toast with jelly, juice -Muffin or bagel and 6-8 oz. low-fat yogurt -French Toast, pancakes or waffles with 1-2 Tbs syrup, juice	-Deli sandwich with thick bread, little mayo -Hearty soup with crackers -Single slice of thick crust cheese and veggie pizza, no meat, and blot grease with a napkin	Crackers, bagel, toast, canned or fresh fruit, yogurt, ½ turkey sandwich, leftover pasta, 16-20 oz. sports drink	-Spaghetti with tomato sauce, no extra spices -Order or cook extra rice, noodles, potato or vegetables with a small serving of chicken, fish or turkey

*The amount of the above foods depends on athlete's recommended daily caloric level and the amount of food that settles well for the athlete.