



Eating for competition

Competition provides a reason for athletes to train, set and achieve goals, learn to work as a team and gives them a chance to shine. It is a time when the athlete wants to perform at their best and put in to play all the skills they have been working on over the last weeks and months.

For young athletes what they eat and drink before competition can make or break that important moment. If they are properly fueled and hydrated they will have that competitive edge. However, if they compete without their nutritional needs met and fully hydrated they will struggle to show how great they can be.

Week of competition

During the week before competition players need to eat a well balanced, nutritional diet. Continue to drink plenty of water and replenish nutrients after practice. Carbohydrates like potatoes, bread, rice and pasta will work to replenish the glycogen levels after practice.

Young athletes do not need to "carb load" before competition. It is important to maintain a good balance in the diet including lots of fruit, vegetables, lean protein as well as carbohydrates. For carbohydrates look to whole grains like wheat, oats, brown rice, wild rice and quinoa.

Cut back on "empty calories". Foods high in saturated fats and sugars like candy, chips, baked treats and fast food can cause sluggishness.

Day of competition

Timing is important!

Make sure you eat before you compete! Eat 2-4 hours before competition. Don't expect your body to perform well without providing it with the nutrients and fuel it needs to do its job. Muscles rely on glycogen storage to have the energy they need to keep going. Don't come to your game without eating a good breakfast.

Doughnut and chocolate milk on the way to the game is not a good breakfast. Prepare yourself with whole grain, lean protein and a fruit.

- Whole wheat bagel with scrambled eggs and a slice of ham, fruit, and milk
- Oatmeal, 1/2 cup of yogurt and piece of fruit
- Pancakes topped with fruit, eggs, sausage and a glass of juice

Plan to have a snack like a protein bar, granola bar or fruit prior to competition if you will be competing a couple hours after breakfast. Keep meals and snacks simple. If your competition is later in the day, eat a good meal a couple hours before your game.

- Ham or Turkey sandwich on whole wheat bread, celery sticks with peanut butter and water
- Triple Decker PB&J on multi grain bread with carrots with dip, piece of fruit and water
- Grilled Chicken wrap loaded with lettuce and veggys. Drizzle with your favorite dressing, water

If you are spending time traveling or watching other games it is easy to forget to stay hydrated and provide the nutrients you need. Plan ahead and pack food and water with you. *If you are packing food make sure to keep food at correct temperatures. Sandwiches with meat need to stay cold.

Nutritional preparation for a player that is nervous.

If your player is nervous and feels they cannot eat before competition, encourage them to have something simple. For example

- a fruit smoothie (you could also add a little protein powder)
- flavored milk or instant breakfast
- oatmeal (instant with the added sugar and flavor is great)
- Yogurt

If nerves are really bad resort to bland food like plain oatmeal, cream of wheat, graham or plain crackers and a **sports drink with sugar** not the G2 or Lite drinks. They need the extra carbohydrate to help fuel their muscles.