

Eating Before Competing

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What can I do before a 10 am soccer game?

Because your blood sugar drops as you sleep, you need to replenish the depleted stores or your morning performance could suffer.

Cereal, bread, fruit, and fruit juice are excellent choices that may help you concentrate better and respond more quickly during that morning soccer game. Or, be sure to eat extra food the day before: Have an extra-big dinner that's low in fat and a substantial bedtime meal or snack. You'll have a better chance of maintaining a high energy level the next morning.

I get so nervous before a competition that I can't even think about eating. What can I do?

Plan to eat several hours before activity, and eat familiar foods that won't cause a surprise stomach upset. Any fuel is better than none, so try to consume *at least* 300 to 500 calories.

I'm so hungry in the afternoon that I buy a candy bar for quick energy before working out. Does sugar hurt sports performance?

.....just candy and no breakfast before exercise improved performance 10% in comparison with eating nothing..... athletes who ate a big breakfast 4 hours before and a candy bar 5 minutes before hard exercise improved 20% during the exercise test compared with when they ate nothing.

The urge for a quick energy fix is a sign you've eaten too little food earlier in the day. To prevent cravings, eat a hearty breakfast and lunch.

Your responsibility is to fuel yourself well throughout game day.

Timing Your Preactivity Meals

The rule of thumb for eating before exercise is to allow 4 hours for a big meal (about 1,200 calories), 2 hours for a light meal (about 600 calories), and an hour or less for a snack (about 300 calories).

Sample carbohydrate-rich menus:

Large Meal

2 large bagels

2 tbsp peanut butter

2 tbsp jam

8 oz fruit yogurt

16 oz orange juice

Light Meal

2 c spaghetti

1/2 c tomato sauce

8 oz low-fat milk

Snack

1 medium banana

1 pkg instant oatmeal

8 oz low-fat milk

Packable Snacks

So you won't go hungry if you're traveling to a night game, stash 1,000 calories of tried-and-true food in your gym bag. (Never try new foods before an important event.) You might even pack extra snacks for underfed teammates. On game day you can add perishable items such as yogurt, bagels, apples or other fresh fruit, or even a sandwich or two.

Some possibilities:

Granola bars or energy bars (about 200 calories each)

Trail mix (about 200 calories per 1/2 cup)

Toaster pastries (about 200 calories each)

Dried fruit (150 calories per 1.5-ounce box of raisins)

Animal crackers (about 140 calories per 12 pieces)

Juice boxes (100 to 150 calories per 8 ounces)

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<http://www.physsportsmed.com/issues/1998/09sep/eating.htm>