

Fisher-Titus Medical Center

SPORTS INJURY GUIDELINES

“The Winning Team for Your Athletic Health Care Needs”

Precompetition Meals

What’s the purpose of the precompetition meal?

The precompetition meal serves two purposes: to keep you from feeling hungry before and during the event and to maintain the levels of sugar in your blood for your exercising muscles to use during training and competition.

Many young athletes often skip meals before they or workout, especially if the workout is in the early morning. Skipping meals or not eating before an early morning workout lowers the stored energy in your body and can impair your performance particularly if your workout involves endurance training that lasts 30 minutes or longer.

When should I eat my precompetition meal?

Your stomach should not be full during your event. In general, it takes 1 to 4 hours for your stomach to digest a meal and empty into your intestines. If you are nervous the digestive process may take even longer. Food that remains in your stomach during competition may cause indigestion, nausea, and vomiting. If you eat your pre-event meal 1 to 3 hours before the start of your competition, your stomach will be almost empty during the event.

What’s a good precompetition meal?

Your pre-event meal should include foods that are high in carbohydrates like breads, pasta, fruits, or vegetables. These foods are removed rapidly from your stomach and intestines. Carbohydrates also help build up the stored energy in your body for use later during your event.

To avoid indigestion or nausea, the closer you are to your event the less you should eat. You can have a liquid meal closer to your competition than a solid meal because liquids are emptied from your stomach faster.

Suggested precompetition menus include the following:

1 hour or less before compete

- Fruit and vegetable juice
- Fresh fruit
- 1 and a half cups of Gatorade

2 to 3 hours before compete

- Either fresh fruit, fruit / vegetable juices and/ or breads, bagels; low fat yogurt
- 4 cups of Gatorade

3 to 4 hours before compete

- Fresh fruit, fruit / vegetable juices
- Breads; bagels, baked potatoes: cereal with low fat milk: sandwiches with a small amount of peanut butter, lean meat.

Does eating sugary foods before exercise improve performance?

Unfortunately, eating sugary foods won’t provide it. Most of the energy for exercise comes from foods eaten several hours or even days prior to start of event.

What should I avoid?

Hot dogs, chips, candy bars found at concession stands are high in fat and not digested quickly. Avoid/limit these foods.