



THE PREGAME MEAL PLANNER

A GUIDE FOR HIGH-SCHOOL ATHLETES

North Central Regional Extension Publication 564



WHAT YOU EAT EVERY DAY CAN HAVE A BIG EFFECT ON HOW YOU PERFORM. WHAT

YOU EAT RIGHT BEFORE AN EVENT CAN BE CRITICAL. WRONG CHOICES CAN BE

DISASTROUS. RIGHT CHOICES CAN GIVE YOU THAT COMPETITIVE EDGE. THE PREGAME

MEAL PLANNER WILL HELP YOU MAKE WISE FOOD CHOICES.

While the pregame meal can supply your body with significant amounts of energy, don't expect it to supply all of the energy you'll need for the event. You should eat the right kinds of food for several days before the event to charge up your muscles with glycogen. Glycogen is a key energy source your muscles use during most sports activities. Although the pregame meal won't cause large increases in muscle glycogen, it will:

No one pregame meal is right for every athlete or every event, but some food choices are much smarter than others. General guidelines for individual food selection and meal planning are on the following page. Make sure your pregame meal plans follow these guidelines.

✓ HELP AVOID HUNGER DURING THE EVENT

✓ STABILIZE BLOOD-SUGAR LEVELS AND ADD SOME FOOD ENERGY TO COMPLEMENT EXISTING ENERGY STORES OF MUSCLE GLYCOGEN

✓ HYDRATE THE BODY (SUPPLY WATER TO THE BODY'S CELLS)

✓ PROVIDE A RELATIVELY EMPTY STOMACH AT GAME TIME

✓ PREVENT GASTROINTESTINAL UPSET OR OTHER ADVERSE REACTIONS TO FOOD

PREGAME GUIDELINES



✓ ALLOW ENOUGH TIME FOR DIGESTION. EAT THE MEAL AT LEAST THREE HOURS BEFORE AN EVENT.

✓ CHOOSE A MEAL THAT'S HIGH IN STARCH. STARCH IS EASY TO DIGEST AND HELPS STEADY THE LEVELS OF BLOOD SUGAR.

✓ CONSUME ONLY MODERATE AMOUNTS OF PROTEIN. PROTEIN FOODS TAKE LONGER TO DIGEST THAN STARCH. AND HIGH-PROTEIN MEALS MAY LEAD TO INCREASED URINE PRODUCTION, WHICH CAN ADD TO DEHYDRATION.

✓ LIMIT FATS AND OILS. THEY TAKE TOO LONG TO DIGEST.

✓ RESTRICT SUGARY FOODS. SWEETS CAN CAUSE RAPID ENERGY SWINGS IN BLOOD-SUGAR LEVELS AND RESULT IN LOW BLOOD SUGAR AND LESS ENERGY.

✓ AVOID FOODS AND DRINKS THAT CONTAIN CAFFEINE. CAFFEINE STIMULATES THE BODY TO INCREASE URINE OUTPUT, WHICH CAN CONTRIBUTE TO DEHYDRATION PROBLEMS, AND A FULL BLADDER CAN BE VERY UNCOMFORTABLE.

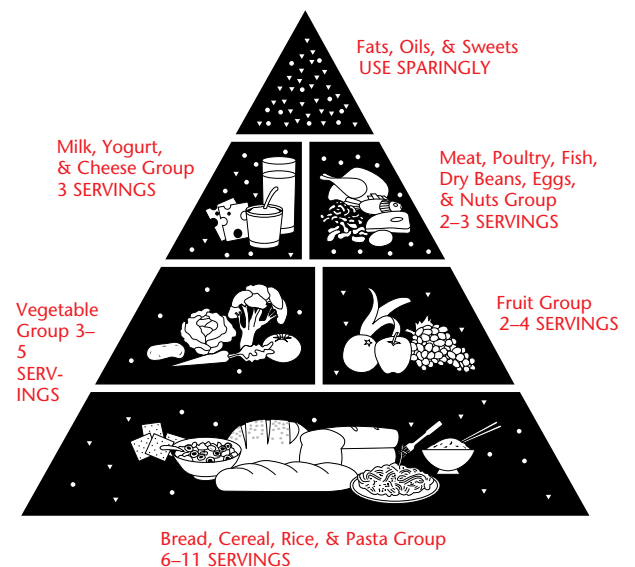
✓ WATCH OUT FOR FOODS THAT PRODUCE GAS. CERTAIN RAW VEGETABLES, FRUITS, OR BEANS MAY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR SOME YOUNG ATHLETES. BE AWARE OF THE FOODS THAT CAUSE YOU PROBLEMS, AND AVOID THEM JUST BEFORE AN EVENT.

✓ WITHIN THESE GUIDELINES, CHOOSE FOODS YOU LIKE TO EAT.

✓ REMEMBER TO DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS WITH YOUR PREGAME MEAL.

EATING PRACTICE EVERY DAY

Remember, what you eat day in and day out provides you with the nutrients and energy to sustain you over the long haul. You can use the Food Guide Pyramid to select a diet that's best for you—on and off the field.



- Fat (naturally occurring and added)
- ▼ Sugars (added)

SUGGESTED MEAL PLANS

Here are some nutritious pregame meal plans that fit the pregame guidelines. At least three of the five major food groups are represented in each meal. These meals are only suggestions. You can probably think up many more that you would like to eat.

MEAL 1

cereal³
banana slices
milk¹
toast/jam
pineapple juice²
water

MEAL 2

chicken noodle soup
crackers
orange
low-fat yogurt
water

MEAL 3

poached egg
toast/jam
milk¹
orange juice²
water

MEAL 4

pancakes⁴
applesauce
milk¹
grape juice²
water

MEAL 5

turkey sandwich/bread
and lettuce
apple
milk¹
tomato juice²
water

MEAL 6

cottage cheese/peach
breadsticks
milk¹
apple juice²
water

MEAL 7

spaghetti/tomato sauce
bread
milk¹
orange juice²
water

MY MEAL

¹Use low-fat or skim milk

²Juice of choice, except prune juice

³Avoid highly sweetened cereals

⁴Limit butter and syrup

If you need more information to plan nutritious meals, get a free copy of *Don't Let Your Diet Let You Down—A Guide for High-School Athletes*, University of Illinois Circular 1044, at your local Cooperative Extension Service office, or write to Publications, 69 Mumford Hall, 1301 West Gregory Drive, Urbana, IL 61801.

FOODS TO CHOOSE

FOODS	COMMENTS
Pasta Macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, ravioli, etc. (plain or with sauce)	Meats, cheese, and oil add fat to the sauce. Use them sparingly.
Rice	Use a sauce low in fat and only as spicy as you can tolerate easily. Or try rice with a little soy sauce flavoring.
Potatoes Baked, boiled, mashed, but <i>not french fries</i>	Limit butter, gravy, or sour cream.
Starchy vegetables Peas, carrots, winter squash, sweet potatoes	Cooked vegetables are more easily digested.
Breads Rolls, muffins, crackers, quick breads, bagels	Use nutritious, low-fat bread products and spreads.
Cereals Oatmeal, other hot cereals, cold cereals	Avoid cereals with high sugar content.
Soups Noodle, rice, vegetable, clear broth, bouillon, or consomme	Choose low-fat soups. Eating large portions of chili, split pea, or bean soups may lead to digestive problems for some athletes.
Pancakes	Limit butter and syrup.
Fruits, fruit juices	Use any juice or cooked fruit except prune. Oranges, bananas, and peeled apples are easily digested raw fruits. You may wish to dilute juices, especially in hot weather. Try hot cider or juice during cold weather.
Milk products Low-fat milk, low-fat yogurt, low-fat cottage cheese, low-fat cheeses, puddings, "shakes" made with low-fat milk or yogurt and fruit and/or juice Liquid meals in a can	Avoid high-fat milk products before games. Though not a substitute for solid foods in the daily diet, liquid meals are convenient for occasional pregame use. You can make liquid meals at home using the following recipe, which makes about 1 quart: 1/2 cup of water 1/2 cup of nonfat dry milk 1/4 cup of sugar 3 cups of skim milk Flavor with a teaspoon of vanilla or cherry extract.

EATING AT ALL-DAY EVENTS

All-day events like track meets or other sports tournaments where an athlete is expected to perform more than once, minutes to hours apart, present special problems. Make the most of a bad situation and remember that the basic pregame meal guidelines still apply.

You may have to eat several "mini" pregame meals over the day. Each meal should be small (under 300 calories) and low in sugar and fat. Even though schedules can be hectic, try to avoid eating within one hour of event time.

Sometimes, it's impossible to purchase suitable foods at the event. Many times, foods and drinks that are available at the refreshment stand (such as hot dogs, candy bars, and caffeinated drinks) are items that you shouldn't eat before performing. In these situations, you must plan ahead. For example, you can bring appropriate foods to the meet. Foods that spoil should be kept in coolers with ice to keep them cold.

Above all, drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration can be a very real danger at all-day events.

FOODS TO AVOID

FOODS	COMMENTS
Candy, sugar, honey	After an initial rise, your blood-sugar level can actually drop below normal, resulting in a sudden feeling of tiredness or fatigue.
Tea, coffee, chocolate, cola	Caffeine consumption leads to dehydration.
Fried foods, high-fat meats, fats, oils, gravies, sour cream, etc.	Fat digests slowly and therefore stays in the stomach longer.
Some raw fruits, vegetables, popcorn, nuts, dry beans and peas	Some of these foods may cause gas and/or an uncomfortable feeling of fullness during the game. An athlete needs to avoid the foods that give him or her problems.
Any new food	Don't experiment with new foods right before an event. If you experience any adverse reactions, your body has little time to recover.
Fruit-flavored drinks	Many drinks contain little fruit juice and a lot of sugar. Read the label.

No TIME?

Plan ahead to have your favorite, quick, pregame foods on hand during the season. If possible, eat at least three hours before you compete.

<p>✓ IF YOU ONLY HAVE TIME FOR A QUICK TRIP TO THE STORE, CONSIDER THESE POSSIBILITIES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ORANGES, BANANAS, PEARS, PEACHES, PLUMS • JUICES • MOZZARELLA STRING CHEESE • YOGURT (LOW-FAT) • SINGLE-PORTION CANS OF FRUIT • BREADSTICKS/ SNACKSTICKS • BREAD WITH JELLY • COTTAGE CHEESE (LOW-FAT) • MILK (LOW-FAT OR SKIM) 	<p>✓ ASK YOUR COACH, FOOD SERVICE DIRECTOR, OR HOME ECONOMICS TEACHER FOR REFRIGERATOR SPACE IF YOU NEED A PREGAME MEAL/ SNACK RIGHT AFTER SCHOOL, BETWEEN CLASSES, OR DURING A FREE PERIOD. A REFRIGERATOR AND/OR MICROWAVE WOULD BE A GOOD BOOSTER CLUB PROJECT.</p>	<p>✓ ASK FOR NUTRITIOUS FOODS IN SCHOOL VENDING MACHINES: YOGURT, FRUIT JUICES, AND SO ON.</p> <p>✓ BRING A THERMOS OF SOUP OR A CASSEROLE FROM HOME.</p>
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REMEMBER: EAT FOODS YOU LIKE AND THAT AGREE WITH YOU FOR PREGAME MEALS. YOU ARE AN INDIVIDUAL WITH YOUR OWN TOLERANCES FOR FOODS. CHOOSING FOODS YOU LIKE MAY GIVE YOU A PSYCHOLOGICAL EDGE.



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