



## Nutrition Guide

### On A Daily Basis

Athletes need lots of energy. High energy levels are the result of good eating and exercise habits. If athletes do not pay attention to this, their performance will suffer.

The athlete's body requires a high level of glycogen stores. Glycogen stores in the body are increased by rest or light levels of exercise and high levels of carbohydrates in the diet. Once glycogen stores are exhausted, it takes at least two days to fully restore them. To keep these glycogen reserves up, athletes should:

- Start each day with a good breakfast. Cold cereal, milk, toast, fruit, and/or fruit juice make an easy-to-fix, quick meal that provides plenty of starch.
- Select meals that contain foods from all five-food groups. Our bodies use nutrients more efficiently when they are consumed together.
- Use high-energy healthy snacks as an-

other opportunity to power up with starch--and don't forget that snack at bedtime. Cold cereal with milk serves as a quick snack at any time. It can be more than the "breakfast" of champions! And you don't have to stop at one bowlful.

- Give starchy foods particular emphasis the days right before the event by building the main meal around a high-starch entree like spaghetti and meatballs. Make sure the other food groups are also represented.
- Decrease physical activity the day before and the day of the event. Light practices directed by your coach are enough. The day before or the day of the event is not the time to organize a pickup game with your friends. Rest up!
- Drink plenty of fluids--even at meal-times--to guard against dehydration.

**Water is the most appropriate drink before, during and after a meet.**

## Day of Meet

Before a meet, digestive processes may be slowed down by the athlete's keyed-up emotional state. To allow for this condition, athletes should eat an easily digestible, balanced meal no later than three hours before the contest. Avoid foods that contain substantial amounts of fats or oils. Fats are more slowly digested than other nutrients. Trying to compete with a high-fat meal still in the stomach is a losing proposition. Meals high in starches are better because they are digested more rapidly than fats or oils. Make sure that the pre-meet meal is a balanced one containing all food groups.

Some athletes like poached eggs, toast, and juice as a light pre-meet meal. Some prefer breakfast cereal with a bagel or toast, and juice. All-day events such as track meets present special problems. Consuming several high-starch mini-meals or snacks, accompanied by ample fluids,

is a winning strategy for these situations. Snacks you might consider bringing to all-day meets include:

- fig bars,
- powerbars,
- dried fruit,
- trail mix,
- granola bars,
- Fruit (ex. bananas, apples, oranges, grapes),
- carrots,
- peanut butter sandwiches,
- peanut butter crackers and
- bagels.

For the meet, stay away from candy, chips and most of the junk food sold in convenience stores or in the concession stand at the track! Bring high-energy snacks! At all costs avoid sugary foods such as candy or honey before a meet. Sweets can cause rapid swings in blood-sugar levels and result in low blood sugar and less energy. Also avoid dairy products such as milk and yogurt.

## After Meet

After a meet, much of the glycogen in the muscle and liver tissue has been used up and creation of new muscle protein slows. To promote glycogen recovery, consume foods and drinks that are high in carbohydrates and protein. When athletes eat the right foods, their bodies can replace lost glycogen rapidly.

Whole foods like cereals, breads, and pastas with a glass of milk are better for total recovery than pure carbohydrate supplements. A mix of whole foods contains proteins, minerals, and vitamins in addition to carbohydrates. You need these other nutrients along with high levels of carbohydrates for a complete, rapid recovery. Remember, whole foods, such as breads and cereals, when eaten with beverages like milk promote more rapid recovery than pure carbohydrates alone.

To assist in total, rapid recovery, the athletes should consume nutritious foods and drinks as soon as they can tolerate them after an event or workout. Ideally, food should be consumed within two hours after activity.