Prepare and Repair: Snacks for Games and Practices

Most athletes have learned through trial and error what type of food works best for his or her body before training or competition. Choosing the best food for you depends on your sport:

- **Cyclists, swimmers, and others** who exercise in a relatively stable position report fewer stomach problems than do runners or athletes in high-running sports that jostle the intestines.
- If you are beginning a new sport or fitness regimen, you will be more likely to have stomach problems than someone who is experienced and well-trained in the sport.
- **Hydration helps your body prepare and repair** – stay hydrated throughout the day, not just at practices.

**PREPARE: Pre-workout food**

- If you will be exercising for **60-90 minutes**, choose food that will provide stable “slow burning” energy – in other words, will not spike your blood sugar. **Cut an apple into quarters, remove the seeds, and stick it back together using natural peanut butter as glue.** Other choices: bananas and peanut butter on whole grain bread, yogurt, oatmeal, string cheese and crackers. **You can get fruit and whole grain items at LaVerde’s.**
- If you will be exercising for **less than 60 minutes**, find a tried-and-true food that does not upset your stomach. A handful of almonds, a few low-fat Triscuits, or a piece of whole-grain bagel.
- Leave yourself enough time to digest: **3-4 hours for a full meal, 1-1.5 hours for a snack** is a rule of thumb, but learn from your own body.
- If you get jittery before competition and can’t eat, remember to eat more – and more healthfully – the day before. **Always eat familiar foods before competition and drink plenty of fluids!**
- Most people fare worst with high-fat foods that take a long time to digest, like french fries, hamburgers, and ice cream.

**REPAIR: Post-workout recovery food**

- **Avoid chronic fatigue** (signs include frequent colds or infections, unexplained joint and muscle pains, insomnia, irritability): refuel properly after exercise. Glycogen used during exercise is best replenished by eating a snack or meal **within two hours** after exercising. If you had a hard workout, you’ll need to eat again **2-3 hours later** to keep replenishing.
- **Eat carbohydrate foods** to replace glycogen – but some protein in your recovery diet can enhance glycogen replacement. Some good protein/carb snacks: fruit and yogurt; low-fat Triscuits or whole grain bagel and tuna; apple and peanut butter; oatmeal with milk or cottage cheese; minestrone or other bean soups.

For help with a personalized eating plan at MIT:

- Contact your physician at MIT Medical and ask for a referral to see the MIT Medical nutritionist. You must have a doctor’s referral to see the nutritionist. Tell the nutritionist that you are interested in a sports nutrition food plan.

Adapted from Nancy Clark’s Sports Nutrition Guidebook
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