

## EATING BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER COMPETITION

### A. Pre-event meal

#### Goals of this meal are to:

1. Ward off hunger and weakness during the event
2. Assure stomach is nearly empty during the event
3. Guarantee optimal hydration
4. Minimize stomach distress
5. Consider psychological preferences

#### General guidelines:

1. The timing of the meal depends upon what and how much is eaten. If high in carbohydrate (and approximately **500** Calories), eat 2-3 hours before event; if high in fat and protein, eat 5-6 hours before event. A general rule: the more fat and the more fiber in the meal, the more time is needed for digestion. Also, as the amount of food consumed increases, so will the amount of time needed for digestion. A liquid source of carbohydrate can be taken immediately prior to the event.
2. Take plenty of fluids, possibly avoiding highly carbonated and/or caffeinated drinks
3. Avoid gas-forming foods, greasy foods, highly seasoned or spicy foods, and eating too much
4. Avoid experimental, new, or drastic changes in diet shortly before competition
5. Realize that no one **food** or class of foods works for everybody; listen to your body

### B. Eating During Competition

This becomes an important consideration in events lasting more than 3-4 hours. The goal is to assure that the athlete is taking in sufficient **fluid** and is getting sufficient **energy in the form of carbohydrate** to prevent hunger and weakness in the latter stages of the event.

### C. Eating After Competition

Here the goal is to replace lost nutrients; specifically, water, glycogen, and salts (sodium, potassium, etc.) if much sweating has occurred. Many people can do this simply by eating regular, balanced meals. Consume enough fluids to replace any body weight lost.

Realize that the total replacement of glycogen and water may take up to 2 days depending upon the amount utilized in the body.

To maximize glycogen replacement, consumption of a high carbohydrate beverage or food (50-100 grams of carbohydrate) should occur immediately after exercise and then be repeated regularly every 2 hours for the next 4-6 hours of recovery.