

## NUTRITION FOR THE ATHLETE

Time pre-exercise	Example food options	
<b>3-4 hours</b>	- Crumpets with jam or honey + flavoured milk - Baked beans on toast - Breakfast cereal with milk	- Bread roll with cheese/meat filling + banana - Fruit salad with fruit yoghurt - Pasta with a plain roll
<b>1-2 hours</b>	- Liquid meal supplement - Milk shake or fruit smoothie - Pancakes with syrup + berries	- Cereal bar - Fruit-flavoured yoghurt - Sports bar or sports drink
<b>Less than 1 hour</b>	- Sports drink - Carbohydrate gel - Cordial	- Sports bar - Jelly lollies - Fresh fruit e.g. banana or orange

### Hydration

Dehydration can impair exercise performance by increasing body temperature, heart rate and fatigue. It's important to start any exercise off in a well-hydrated state as sweat losses during an event are most likely to be greater than fluid intake. Consuming enough fluids in the days leading up to the competition will ensure adequate fluid balance. During the day of competition it is best to begin drinking early and adopt a pattern of having small volumes regularly. Drinks should be cool, palatable and available or they are unlikely to be consumed. Sports drinks are used to top-up fuel stores and replace fluid and sodium lost in sweat. They increase fluid absorption and retention and also increase voluntary intake! Any fluid deficit after exercise should be restored within the first hour to assist in the recovery process. *For more information see our 'Fluid and Hydration' fact sheet.*

**Use sports drinks in any high intensity 'stop-n-start' sports and endurance events longer than 1 hour**

### Tips for competition

- \* Start the event well hydrated and fully recovered from any previous training or event
- \* Gastrointestinal comfort, likes and dislikes and food availability should all be taken into account when planning nutritional competition strategies
- \* Pack your own food for the day, do not rely on sporting venues to provide appropriate meals or snacks - and always take a little extra just in case
- \* Consider the amount of time between eating and performance when choosing foods during all-day events
- \* Low GI, carbohydrate-rich foods consumed before an event can give a sustained release of energy during exercise that will aid in delaying fatigue
- \* High GI carbohydrates are recommended during and after exercise to rapidly supply fuel to the working muscles and assist in the recovery process
- \* Sports drinks are recommended for any high intensity 'stop-n-start' sports and endurance events over 60 minutes
- \* Experiment with pre-event nutrition strategies in training to find what works best for you



Information included in this document was obtained from the Australian Institute of Sport and the Clinical Sports Nutrition book

## NUTRITION FOR THE ATHLETE

For athletes to compete at their highest ability, an intensive training program incorporated with optimal nutrition is essential. The high energy requirements of athletes must be met on a daily basis to ensure maximum gains from training are seen. Pre-competition nutrition strategies include dietary interventions that are implemented during the week prior to an event, within hours before the event and after it in the rest or recovery periods. Goals may be to minimise fluid deficits, ensure adequate fuel stores or prevent stomach discomfort for the event. Following your own individualised nutrition plan will increase performance by delaying fatigue and decreasing any obstacles that are likely to limit performance.

**Good nutrition is essential if you want to compete at your highest level**

Practical issues such as perishable foods, refrigeration needs and the products available from sporting venues must be taken into account when planning for competition. Strategies should be flexible as many sporting events can be unpredictable when it comes to the exact start time and rests between games/heats.



### Competition preparation

Carbohydrates are the main fuel source for the body and the primary goal when preparing for competition is to maximize these fuel stores. This can be achieved by adequate carbohydrate intake and either tapered exercise for endurance events or at least one day of rest or lighter training for non-endurance events. *See our 'Carbohydrates in Training' fact sheet for info on carbohydrate requirements or see an Accredited Practising Dietitian for expert dietary advice tailored to your needs.*

### The pre-event meal

It is recommended that a low GI, carbohydrate-rich meal or snack be consumed 2-4 hours prior to events to ensure adequate fuel stores. In situations such as tournaments or carnivals, time between events could be limited and this may not always be practical. If this occurs it could be more appropriate to eat smaller, yet nutritious snacks throughout the day. Choosing options low in fat and protein will reduce the risk of stomach discomfort during the event. Some athletes who are prone to gastro upsets may benefit from a smaller pre-event meal. Foods with a lower fibre content (e.g. low fat yoghurt or pancakes) tend to cause less discomfort and may be a more suitable option. Sports drinks or liquid meals such as fruit smoothies or commercial beverages are also beneficial for athletes whose appetites are suppressed by nerves or if the event timetable is unknown. Commercial liquid meal supplements can be handy for the travelling athlete who may not have access to appropriate or familiar foods. Individual tolerance to intake varies greatly so be sure to fine tune your strategies in training first.

