

# Track and Field Nutrition Tips

Angie Tague, RD, CSSD, LD

General Guidelines for Healthy Eating Throughout Training:

- Eat consistent meals (3 meals per day) that are well-balanced (include all 5 food groups). This will keep your energy stores full for optimal performance. Skipping meals or restricting intake could add seconds or minutes to your time.
- See [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) for more details on food groups.
- Include healthy snacks between meals.
- The picture of healthy eating is summed up by the "Plate Method" way of eating: 1/2 half of your plate covered in vegetables, 1/4 meat or meat alternative, and 1/4 whole grains, and low-fat milk to drink. Drink water in between meals. Focus on high-carbohydrate snacks such as fruits, pretzels, crackers, yogurt, etc.

Sample Day of Healthy Eating for Performance:

Breakfast:

Cereal with skim-1% milk  
Banana  
Cup of orange juice

Snack:

handfull pretzels and almonds

Lunch:

Chicken sandwich on whole wheat bread w/tomato, lettuce, mayo, mustard  
Handful of baby carrots  
Skim-1% milk

Snack:

half whole wheat bagel with jelly

Dinner:

3-4 ounces Salmon  
Broccoli  
Baked Potato  
Whole grain roll w/butter

Dessert/Snack:

Hot chocolate with skim-1% milk

Race Day General Guidelines:

- Eat regardless of your feelings of hunger. Do not skip breakfast/pre-race meal because of nervousness or lack of appetite. Doing this could hurt your performance.
- Eliminate foods high in protein and fat because they digest more slowly causing food to stay in the digestive tract longer. (ie, stay away from steak and eggs for breakfast.)
- Also, stay away from high-fiber foods which may cause unwanted trips to the bathroom.
- Eat your pre-race meal 3-4 hours prior to competition to allow time for energy storage in the form of glycogen in your muscles and liver.

Sample race-day:

Breakfast (3-4 hrs before competition):

Oatmeal with a banana

Orange juice

Eat easily digestible snacks throughout the day in the place of regular meals if you have multiple events:

Liquid meal replacement drinks such as Ensure, GatorPro Sports Nutrition drink, Boost. Sports bars with adequate carbohydrate like Power Bar or Clif Bar (not "Protein bars" which may be harder to digest).

Pretzels, crackers, etc.

Stay away from legumes (beans), fructose (fruit and fruit juice), and milk products until after competition because of the slow rate at which they are absorbed.

#### Recovery Nutrition

Within 15 minutes after an intense practice or competition, consume 50-75 grams of carbohydrate (or 1.0-1.5 grams/kg body mass). Make sure to have a little bit of protein with the carbohydrate to optimize glycogen repletion (filling up the energy tanks for the next race).

Example: Same as snack ideas above.

Have a snack every 2 hours with the same amount of carbohydrate until eating a large meal.

#### Hydration Guidelines

by: SCAN (Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutritionist) Website

It is well documented that even a 1% dehydration level can decrease performance in an athlete. Key signs of dehydration are fatigue, headache, lightheadedness, dry mouth and dark-colored urine. To prevent these harmful effects, include hydration in your athlete's training program.

- Drink 16-20 oz (480-600 mL) of water or sports drink 2 hours before activity
- Drink 7-10 oz (210-300 mL) of water or sports drink 10-15 minutes prior to activity
- Drink 7-10 oz (210-300 mL) of water or sports drink every 15-20 minutes through workout
- Drink 20-24 oz (600-720 mL) of water or sports drink for every pound lost during workout

Beyond stating general hydration guidelines like these, teach athletes how to replace sweat losses during exercise. See the 2007 American College of Sports Medicine position stand referenced below.

It is also important that athletes consume enough sodium to help prevent cramping and fatigue. Good snacks are pretzels, crackers, baked chips, soups, and sports drinks. Many sports products like sports beans, shot blocks, and goos/gels also provide electrolytes. Remember that sodium drives thirst so including sodium-rich foods on heavy training days can actually help athletes do a better job of hydrating!

As a sports dietitian, educate coaches and trainers on the importance of "water breaks" during their practices and training sessions. Keeping athletes hydrated will keep their energy levels up!

by: SCAN (Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutritionist) Website