

# **Nutrition & Travel:**

## **How to look after your diet on the road**



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# Contents

1. Sports Nutrition Basics
2. Eating for Competition
  - Pre-race
  - Recovery
3. Travel
  - Before you leave
  - On the plane
  - When you arrive
  - European Cuisine
  - Looking after your gut
  - Don't starve
  - Don't overeat
  - Dine without fear
  - Takeaway eating
  - Fluid requirements
  - It's not a holiday!
  - Be safe with food
  - If you get sick

# Sports Nutrition Basics

## Carbohydrate

- Comes from pasta, bread, rice, noodles, breakfast cereal, sugar, muffins, muesli bars, potato and fruit
- Ends up as glucose in the blood and is stored as glycogen in the muscles and the liver. They are the main fuel for exercising muscle, especially at medium to high intensities.

## Protein

- Comes from meat, fish, seafood, dairy products
- Repairs/replaces damaged cells
- Used for energy if diet low in carbohydrate
- Many protein foods contain fat: choose carefully
- Make sure you include some protein with your carbohydrate before and after training sessions eg yoghurt, milk, ham sandwich.

## Fat

- Is found in fatty cuts of meat, full cream dairy products eg milk and cheese, chocolate, some snack foods and most take away foods
- Are a very dense energy source but cannot contribute to glycogen (muscle energy) stores. Fat is burnt for fuel when you exercise at low intensities eg walking.

## Fluid needs

Athletes can lose several litres of fluid during training or competition especially during warmer weather. Dehydration will lead to poor concentration and coordination. You need to drink enough fluid to make up for what is lost in sweat during training and competition. Check your weight before and after training or competition and aim to drink enough to get back to your pre-exercise weight (1 Kg lost = 1.5 Litres to drink).

**Good Choices** - sports drink or water are best. Sports drink has the added benefit of containing sodium (salt) which helps your body to retain the fluid and carbohydrate in a form that's easy to take in during exercise. Fruit juice, cordial and milk are good choices as long as you don't have to watch your weight.

**Poorer Choices**- alcohol, cola drinks, tea, coffee and energy drinks are mild diuretics and will increase fluid loss in your urine. Soft drinks are acceptable but the bubbles tend to be filling making it difficult to drink enough. The sugar content makes it hard for some athletes to control their body fat levels.

# Eating for Competition

## The night before

What you are trying to achieve with this meal is muscles that are fully stocked with glycogen so you can be as fast and as powerful as possible during the game. To do this your meal should be high in carbohydrate (bread, rice, pasta, noodles) and low in fat. The amount of protein (meat, fish, chicken, eggs) you eat the is not as important for this meal. You should also be topping up your fluid levels.

### Ideas:

- Big bowl of pasta with chicken and tomato based sauce
- Beef stir-fry with lots of rice or noodles
- Spaghetti Bolognese
- Medium steak with lots of rice salad

## Pre-race Meal (3-4 hours before race)

The aim of this meal is to keep your fluid and carbohydrate levels topped up without leaving you feeling bloated.

### Ideas:

- Large bowl pasta/rice with low fat sauce eg tomato and a little meat
- Large bowl breakfast cereal
- Lean meat and salad sandwiches
- Yoghurt and fruit salad
- Have with glass water or sports drink

If you find it hard to eat much before a race try using the foods listed under "pre-race snack" for your pre-race meal or try eating a little earlier than suggested. Focus more on the food you eat the night before and earlier in the day.

## Pre-race Snack (1-2 hours before race)

The main aim of a pre-race snack is to top up fluids and carbohydrates with something very light. Foods containing lots of fibre, fat or protein take longer to digest so do not make a good pre-race snack as they may still be sitting in your belly when you go out to race. Drinks are usually easier to digest than solid foods. If you find it hard to eat this close to the race sip on sports drink or water instead of the other options. If you race early in the morning you can skip the pre-race meal and stick to the snack options.

**Ideas:**

- Cordial/fruit juice/sports drink
- Sustagen
- Fruit
- Toast with tinned spaghetti (white bread)
- Pikelets with jam
- Honey sandwich (white bread)

**In between races**

There is unlikely to be time or opportunity to take in much food in between races. Sip on sports drink or water.

**Recovery**

Right after a heavy exercise session there is a "window of opportunity" to speed up recovery. Eating carbohydrate containing foods and fluids in the first hour or so after finishing the race will mean that your muscle glycogen stores are restocked more quickly and you are less likely to feel flat the next day. Having a little bit of protein at this time might also help to repair your muscle and help to maintain your muscle mass.

Examples (those marked with \* contain protein)

- Sandwiches with lean meat, egg or cheese\*
- Sports drink/water/soft drink (not cola type)
- Protein Plus Powder or Sustagen popper\*
- Fruit
- Low fat muffins
- Jelly type lollies

# Travel

There's no doubt travelling is an exciting experience and a great way to reward all those long hours of training. Unfortunately travelling can often mean delays, different time zones and takeaway or restaurant foods. It is easy to forget about nutritional goals when caught up in the excitement of visiting a new country. In order to cope with the nutritional challenges raised by travelling it is important to stay focused on your nutritional goals:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Lots of variety
- High carbohydrate foods
- Low fat foods

## Before you leave

Take a supply of foods you may not be able to find overseas. Consider where you are travelling and the likely availability of foods you normally eat. Some things you might want to take with you include

- Breakfast cereal
- Instant noodles
- Nuts
- Sustagen powder
- Cereal bars
- Crackers
- Vegemite
- Sports drink powder
- Multivitamin/Mineral supplement
- Kettle
- Drink bottles or shakers
- Can opener

These foods can provide some of the comfort of home and are good for use in emergencies when appropriate food is not available or if car/bus/train travel interferes with your normal meal schedule.

### **On the Plane**

The pressurised cabins on the aeroplane can cause more fluid than normal to be lost from the lungs and skin which increases the risk of dehydration. Don't rely on thirst as an indicator, plan to consume fluid regularly (approximately 300ml/hour). Water and sports drink are generally the best choices. Take your own supply of fluids on board with you rather than relying on cabin service.

Eating meals at times that fit with the meal times at your destination can help to reduce jet lag. It is a good to take your usual snacks on board with you, eg: cereal bars, pikelets. Chewing gum is a good way to make sure you aren't eating out of boredom.

### **When you get there**

A change in climatic conditions can upset your usual eating and drinking patterns. Travelling schedules may cause you to miss your usual meal times or you may find it difficult to find your usual foods. Keeping to your usual routine as much as possible will help you stick to your nutrition plan. Have a supply of snack foods for times when you can't avoid missing meals or have to eat later than usual.

### **European Cuisine**

There is wonderful variety in European cuisine and most needs will be catered for. In general, meals tend to be high in protein and fat and lower in carbohydrate than most athletes would like. Choose meals cooked with low fat cooking methods such as grilling and steaming where possible. Watch out for added fats in the form of rich gravies and sauces. Try to avoid dishes based on sausage or fatty meats. Ask for extra low fat carbohydrate in the form of steamed/baked potato, steamed rice or plain bread. Opt for fruit based sweets where possible.

### **Look After Your Gut**

Long hours of travelling can upset your digestive system. Low fibre meals combined with humid conditions and being seated for long periods can cause your gut to become a little sluggish. To minimise constipation, drink lots of fluid and eat fibre rich foods such as fresh fruit, wholemeal bread, breakfast cereals and vegetables.

### **Don't Starve**

You may find it difficult choosing from an array of unfamiliar foods. Travelling schedules may cause you to miss meal times. Don't let yourself get too hungry or you might be tempted by the first fast food outlet you see. Missing meals regularly will see you drained of energy and unable to perform at your best. Always have some snacks available. Ask restaurants to prepare special meals if you are unable to find something suitable.

### **Don't Overeat**

Sitting on planes, buses, trains or in the car for long periods of time requires little energy. You need less food than on training days. Don't confuse boredom with hunger or you will overeat. Some may find the array of new and unusual foods a temptation to overindulge. Try to eat the amount you normally eat. Allow yourself treats but stay committed to your nutritional goals.

### **Dine Without Fear**

You may have to eat lots of meals from restaurants and takeaways. It is possible to eat well in these situations if you remember your nutritional goals. Be assertive and don't be afraid to make special requests if you need to. Order extra carbohydrate if needed (bread, steamed rice, potato, noodles etc.) and fluid (jugs of water).

### **Takeaways**

The following are some better takeaway choices:

- rolls/ sandwiches - plenty of salad/no margarine/lean meat
- pizza - thick crust/vegetarian or lean meat/ask for less cheese
- hamburger - plenty of salad/watch the mayonnaise
- souvlaki
- baked potato - avoid butter or sour cream
- chicken burger - plenty of salad/watch the mayonnaise
- low fat smoothies
- low fat frozen yoghurt

### **Pay Attention To Fluid Requirements**

It is common to drink less when travelling due to lack of opportunity and the extra expense of having to buy fluids. A change to a hotter, more humid climate will increase your fluid requirements. Always carry a water bottle with you. Work out drinking regularly throughout the day as well as during exercise.

### **It's Not A Holiday**

Being away from home creates a holiday atmosphere. It can be easy to be caught up in this and push good nutrition to one side. Stay focused on your nutritional goals and you'll stay on the road to success.

### **Be Safe With Food**

Generally European food is of a similar safety standard as that found in Australia. However it is difficult to perform at your best when dealing with a case of 'Traveller's Trots'. Make sure you stick to food that looks fresh and appetising and remember that hot food should be served piping hot and cold food should be cold and not lukewarm.

### **If you get sick**

If you do suffer from a bout of diarrhoea or vomiting make sure you

- Keep drinking fluids. Sports drinks or oral rehydration solutions eg Gastrolyte are helpful.
- Eat small amounts of food regularly rather than big meals
- Plain low fibre foods eg white bread, pasta, white rice, plain breakfast cereal, mashed potato or tinned fruit.
- Avoid large intakes of fruit juice or fatty foods