



# Fueling Your Athletes for Game Day

Sports nutrition can greatly affect an athlete's energy, endurance and performance. As parents and coaches, you have the opportunity to properly fuel your children and players for their sport. There is an overwhelming amount of information available on the internet but breaking it down into simple categories will help for practical application for your family or team.

## Pre-Game Meals and Snacks

For pre-game, the timing of the meals will guide you as to what foods to choose. A meal planned for 3-4 hours prior to activity can be larger and accommodate for high fiber and moderately fatty foods. These types of meals would be whole wheat pasta with meat sauce and salad with dressing.

Meals to be consumed between 2-3 hours before activity would be smaller amounts and easier to digest, low fiber and fat. Ideally, the foods you choose at this time would be a combination of high carbohydrate and low glycemic index, such as sandwiches with whole grain bread, crackers and peanut butter, yogurt with soy nuts, or low fat cottage cheese with fruit. In addition to foods, there should be plenty of fluids consumed. If timing only allows for a snack within 30 minutes of game time, aim for a snack that is high in carbohydrate with a small amount of protein such as a granola bar with a sports drink for an energy boost.

## Snacks During Activity

During long training days, multi-game tournament days, or multi-session days, it's necessary to consume snacks that consist mostly of carbohydrates, some protein and little fat. This helps to keep energy stores high in the muscles. These are easily portable, portioned snacks eaten throughout the day, such as, granola or energy bars, bananas, bagels, or a trail mix that contains very little nuts.

## Post-Game/Activity Meals

The post-game meal is significantly affected by a two hour post-activity window that most effectively absorbs nutrients. During this window it is most important to consume plenty of carbohydrates, proteins and fluids. In recent years, carbohydrates went under a bit of scrutiny for the general public, but in an active population they are essential. Carbohydrates replace the energy stores in the muscles as well as aid the protein to enter the muscle for repairing the tissue. The goal for post-workout foods would be 3 grams of carbohydrate to every 1 gram of protein. If it was a more strenuous workout or

multi-activity day the carbohydrate should be increased to 4 grams. A few examples of easy snacks/meals to include post-workout would be low fat yogurt, low fat chocolate milk, or a protein powder smoothie made with low fat milk.

Make sure that your athletes understand that the types of foods they are consuming directly affect their performance. Making well-planned game day meal and snack choices can mean the difference for finishing the day strong or crashing half-way through the second game of a tournament.

## Resources

Amy Goodson, Speaker, Sports Nutrition, January 8-9, 2011, Dallas, TX <http://www.texashealth.org/body.cfm?id=1271>

[http://www.gssiweb.com/Article\\_List.aspx?subtopicid=108&topicid=2](http://www.gssiweb.com/Article_List.aspx?subtopicid=108&topicid=2)

<http://www.glycemicindex.com/>

<http://www.nancyclarkrd.com/books/sportsnutrition.asp>



### About the Author

Bethany Covert is a Certified Athletic Trainer that has been with Illinois Bone and Joint since 2010. Bethany is a graduate of Eastern Illinois University, Charleston IL, where she received her BS in Non-Teaching Physical Education / Athletic Training. She earned her Master's degree in Athletic Training at Western Michigan University in 2002. Prior to coming to IBJI, Bethany completed a Sports Medicine Fellowship at the Olympic Training Center in Lake Placid, NY and has worked in the high school setting as an athletic trainer for 8 years.

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