

MERCER UNIVERSITY

PRE-EXERCISE AND POST-EXERCISE NUTRITION GUIDELINES:

(For morning or mid day games)

The types of foods eaten before and after hard physical activity greatly influence an athlete's performance level. Generally, at least one meal and one snack should be consumed before exercise and sports activities, and both should be high in carbohydrates. A high carbohydrate meal helps top off the glycogen stores, and a snack high in simple carbohydrates (about 1 hour before activity) increases the availability for energy formation, while reducing the depletion of glycogen stores.

The foods consumed after exercise should provide both carbohydrates and protein. The carbohydrates raise the blood insulin levels, and that increases the transfer of amino acids (provided by the protein) into the muscle cells. Amino acids enter into the muscle cells and promote muscle recovery. The post-exercise snack needs to be eaten as soon as possible after exercise is done, and no later than 45 minutes after exercise.

Athletes should also drink water or electrolyte replacement drinks (PowerAde, Gatorade...) before, during and after exercise to maintain proper body fluid balance and hydration.

Listed below are some sample foods for suggested pre-exercise meal, snack and post-exercise snack.

Pre-exercise meal (should be eaten approximately 3-4 hours before exercise).

Recommended food choices:

- Oatmeal w/ honey and low fat milk
- Cereal (Total, Special K, Mini Wheat's, Life) with low fat milk
- 2 pieces of fresh fruit with low fat cottage cheese
- Whole wheat bagel with salmon and low fat, low sodium, cream cheese

Pre-exercise snack (should be eaten approximately 45 min. to 1 hour before exercise).

Recommended food choices:

- Banana
- Fruit juice
- Electrolyte replacement drinks (PowerAde, Gatorade...)
- Jell-o
- Sherbet

Post-exercise snack (needs to be eaten as soon as possible after exercise. No later than 45 minutes after exercise). Recommended food choices:

- Balance bar/Power bar
- Low fat fruit yogurt
- Low fat chocolate milk