

"What and when to eat"

"What and when do I eat"

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Nutrition denotes all the foods a person eats or drinks. What we eat, when we eat and how we eat it, will determine the quality of our performance as athletes! Food is the fuel of the body and this "fuel" is measured in calories.

But this food intake, and the calories they produce, is a balancing act: not enough and the athlete's performance will suffer, too many and the athlete will store the excess as fat tissue, which will reduce performance. Therefore, each athlete should know his/her "fighting weight", and use this number as norm for the calorie-intake!

My advice to you is: Consult a dietician to find out what the basic calorie requirement for your weight and body type is – then double that number if you are practicing about 2 hours per day! Then monitor your weight so that you can react to weight gain as soon as possible!

The 6 classes of nutrients needed to balance the diet are:

1. Carbohydrates
2. Fats
3. Proteins
4. Vitamins
5. Fiber
6. Fluids

with the first 3 responsible for the calories needed!

<u>% DAILY CALORIES</u>	<u>FOOD TYPE</u>	<u>EXAMPLES OF FOOD</u>
60 -65%	Carbohydrates	rice, pasta, potatoes, bread, sweets
20%	Fats	veggies, red meat, dairy products, olive oil, peanuts, butter
15 – 20%	Proteins	eggs, milk, fish, beef, soya, oats

I don't want to be caught up in the arguments of Banting diets or energy drinks or other supplements: an athlete should consult a doctor before considering these!

Useful tips about eating habits:

1. Vegetables and fruits should be eaten raw at every meal.
2. Unrefined grain products must be part of the diet.
3. Eat 3 meals per day – and all of them should include small portions of protein. Some sources suggests that 5 – 6 small meals per day would ensure a more stable energy level all day long – which would be better on competition days!
4. Carbohydrates must fill more than half of your plate but stay away from sugar, rather use starch as fuel for calories. Drink water when thirsty – small sips at regular intervals, before, during and after competitions or practices! One glass of water should accompany all meals. Stay away from alcohol.
5. Don't add extra salt to food...normal use of salt in food will be enough! Stay away from salty snacks! Rather eat fish, chicken and veal in the place of red meat.
6. Meals should be prepared with olive or sunflower oil. Canola products are also advised. Avoid boiling or frying your food – rather grill, steam or bake.

Pre-competition nutrition:

What you eat and when you eat it before a competition will affect your performance level.

1. The last meal before the competition starts should be taken 2-4 hours before. If this meal is a special liquid meal, the time comes down to 1-2 hours.
2. If breakfast is far away from the start of the competition, don't eat bacon and eggs for breakfast as fats and protein are slowly digested. Oats or mielie meal porridge or Bran cereal will be adequate.
3. If the competition is in late afternoon, stay away from hamburgers/hotdogs during the day. Rather eat smaller meals of not more than 500 calories at regular intervals. Again, a special liquid meal – pre-made at home and stored in a flask/plastic holder – 1 to 2 hours before competing, will benefit the you the most.
4. Drink small amounts of (room temperature) water often during a competition day.

During competition

1. It is not recommended that athletes eat anything during competitions.
2. Drink small amounts of (room temperature) water often during competitions. During long distance events the organizers will supply watering points – make use of them.

During field events bring your own bottle of water with you.

Post-competition nutrition

1. It is very important that the athlete must replace the energy used during competition, within 15 minutes after the event. A handful of peanuts and raisins will shorten the recovery time.
2. Hydrate by drinking water is essential.
3. In the hours and days after a competition lots of carbohydrates, protein, vitamins [A and B] and minerals

must be taken in...less so for sprinters and field items, more so for long distance/cross country/ endurance events.

Again, I am not against supplements – I am only recommending that these products must be taken on medical advice! There are a lot of supplements on the market – and they will help in the most cases – but be aware of the doping requirements of the ASA...one can unwittingly transgress by using the wrong medication/supplements!

Bibliography

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