

Pre-game meal

Throughout sports, athletes of all shapes, sizes, and ability levels have pre-game rituals. Some of these are based in superstition, while others have a scientific backing and have been shown to increase performance in a measurable way. It should come as no surprise then, that many of the greatest athletes follow a well thought out nutrition plan and exercise regimen when preparing for competition. What you eat before a game can greatly impact your performance, both positively and negatively; if you want to perform well, you must supply the body with the nutrients that it will require in order to keep up, and excel.

Your last substantial meal prior to a game or competition should be consumed 2-4 hours before the start time. This will allow enough time for the food to be digested and absorbed by the body. The size of the meal, and the foods that are consumed, will vary depending on caloric needs and individual tolerance. Ideally, though, the pre-game meal would meet the following criteria..

Pre-game meal (2-4 hours before):

- High in complex carbohydrates (low glycemic index)
 - Low-Moderate fiber
- Moderate amount of protein
- Low fat

It is important for this meal to be lower in fat and fiber because these two nutrients slow digestion, which keeps your stomach full for a longer period of time and delays the absorption of nutrients. Protein should be included in this meal in moderate amounts, because it will help keep you satisfied and supply your body with the necessary amino acids. The key to this meal, though, is that it contains good quality, slower digesting carbohydrates. This includes things like: brown rice, sweet potatoes, oatmeal, quinoa, couscous, pancakes or waffles, whole grain cereals (un-sweetened) or whole grain bread. Because these carbohydrates are slower digesting, they will provide sustained energy for the duration of the game or workout.

As game time approaches, it is beneficial to supply your body with additional nutrients; this time, however, we prefer a small portion size and carbohydrates that digest more quickly.

Pre-game snack (15min-1 hour before):

- High in faster digesting carbohydrates (higher glycemic index)
 - Little or no fiber
- Low protein
- Little or no fat

For this snack, things such as sports drinks, fruit, fig bars and energy bars are preferred. These foods can be digested and absorbed quickly by the body, providing additional energy that will be used once the game or workout starts.

While the pre-game meal might sound like a pass to consume just about anything, there are some no-no's..

Things to avoid	Reasoning
Unfamiliar foods	May cause: gas, bloating, upset stomach, slower rate of digestion
Fats and oils	Digests at a very slow rate
Too much protein	Digests slowly
Fruit juices, candy, sugar	Products that are high in simple sugars will cause a spike in blood sugar, which leads to increased insulin production. This can cause energy levels to “crash” during the game
Beans, onions, broccoli, etc.	These foods can cause gas and bloating
Foods that are high in fiber	Causes the meal to digest slower, can cause bloating or gas