

Tournament and Multiple Practice Day Eating Strategies

You may feel confident in your ability to practice proper nutrition on a regular basis, but are you prepared for weekend-long tournaments or two-a-days? These situations place extra demands on your body which requires you to pay even more attention to what and when you eat.

If you will be competing two days in a row, be sure to prime your body for peak performance with proper nutrition. The best foods to eat the night before a game or tournament should be the same as your goals for every dinner – the key is to make sure it is a meal you are used to eating. And this meal should be made up of whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables. Here is one simple example:

- ⇒ Whole wheat pasta with marinara sauce, a chicken breast chopped up and added to the pasta, along with a handful of spinach cooked in to the sauce
- ⇒ Remember to drink plenty of fluids so that on the day of your event you are well hydrated.

The Most Effective Warm-up: Breakfast

You know your body best and you know how much you can handle before an event. Breakfast is an important way to charge the body pre-competition and to prepare it for a full day of work. If you know that downing a pancake, bacon, and sausage breakfast right before your 7 a.m. swim meet is going to make you sick, listen to your body. It is recommended to consume a 200-500 calorie carbohydrate-rich breakfast two to four hours prior to an event. This will help you to have more energy to get through your practices or competition. Try these:

- Whole wheat bagel or toast with peanut butter
- Bowl of cereal with low-fat organic milk
- Smoothie with frozen fruit and milk
- Greek yogurt with fruit
- Oatmeal and scrambled eggs

Between Game Meals/Snacks

Maintaining optimal energy levels can be tough when you are on a baseball field all weekend. Make sure that you have some quick, high energy snacks to eat between games so you maintain your energy levels. Even when there is a concession stand, it is usually low-quality fuel for athletes so planning ahead and packing these snacks to have on hand is always a good idea!

- Peanut butter and jelly sandwich
- Trail mix (for example: raw almonds with dried cranberries)
- Energy bar like a Clif Nectar, Lara Bar, or Pure Bar
- Fresh fruit
- Greek yogurt

Hydration and Sports Drinks

Whether the sun is sweltering down in the middle of an afternoon softball game or it is your second practice for the grueling two-a-days for football, hydration is a hugely important and often overlooked factor in these types of situations. Sports drinks are critical to replenish fluids and electrolytes lost through sweat. They also provide energy which can help maintain blood sugar levels between meals/snacks. Do not wait until you are thirsty since this means you are already dehydrated.

- Make sure you have a hydration plan and stick to it!
- Drink 16 oz (2 cups) of fluid 2 hours before practice or game.
- Drink 8 oz (1 cup) of fluid 10-20 minutes before practice or game. (In very hot or very cold weather you need 12-20 oz 10-20 minutes prior to practice or game).
- Drink 7-10 oz every 10-20 minutes during exercise.
- After practice or game drink 20 oz for every pound of weight lost. Ideally, complete rehydration within 2 hours of exercise.
- At least, on occasion, weigh yourself before and after your practice/competition to see how many pounds you are typically losing so you can plan your hydration plan appropriately.

Recovery

Recovery is one of the most important aspects of sports nutrition and optimal fueling for an athlete. Consuming the right mix of carbohydrates and protein post-game, practice, or exercise allows the body and its muscles to refuel and be ready for the next practice or game. Recovery is even more important when you have multiple games or practices on the same day. Make sure you drink a recovery beverage within 30 minutes following your workout or game. A great easy option is low fat chocolate milk.