

# Game Day and Tournament Nutrition

## I. Single Game

- 1) **General** – The USDA Food Pyramid is good for the food industry, not for athletes. Recommended daily allowances are bare minimums, and usually not enough for those who are highly active, and especially not for young, growing athletes.
- 2) **Pre-game**
  - Eat about two hours before the game, but not less than two hours, as this can lead to nausea during play
  - NO CARBONATED DRINKS, ESPECIALLY SOFT DRINKS.
  - No junk foods such as sugary snacks or chips (even if they are baked)
  - Good carbohydrates (below) will give more even energy throughout the game
  - Minimize heavy fats and proteins in pre-game meal
  - Make sure you are well hydrated; do not wait until you are thirsty to drink
  - Water is best for hydration before and during a game. Avoid sports drinks until after games (see post-game discussion below)
  - Example – depending on the time of play, get some protein with less fat content (two boiled eggs, a small chicken breast, etc.) nothing fried or highly fatty like most pork or beef. All other calories should be in the form of vegetables, grains and fruit (see “Good Carbs” below). Solid food is preferable to liquids, such as shakes and smoothies, but avoid fast food.
- 3) **Post-game**
  - Sports drinks can be useful post-game, but most contain high levels of sugar and should be diluted.
  - Try to eat some good carbohydrates as soon as possible after play – a light fruit smoothie is o.k. here (light enough to be digested in an hour). Below is a list of good post-game snacks that can be provided for players.
  - Eat a meal within an hour of eating the post- game carbs.
  - Example – Carbs like the pre-game meal, but more fat and protein is acceptable. Again, solid food is preferable. Sandwiches on whole grain bread are good (have the sandwich heated, if possible), but avoid too much meat and get plenty of vegetables. Pasta (with oil, cream sauce, marinara or meat sauce, etc.), vegetables and Mexican food (rice and beans) are also good. Avoid fast food. Just a raw salad by itself is not recommended, although a salad with a meal is good.
  - Drink as much fluid as can be tolerated (sip, don’t chug) before the next practice or game

## II. Tournament – treat tournament games like regular games, with these exceptions:

- 1) Only drink (diluted) sports drinks *immediately* following a game when there is another game to be played later the same day. Do not continue to drink sports drinks throughout the time between games.
- 2) Do not eat a full meal after the game if your next game is in less than two hours. Get some food, especially good carbs and fluids.

3) For lunch between games, follow the guidelines above for pre- and post-game meals. Avoid fast food.

4) For dinner in the middle of a tournament with games the next day, the biggest key is to make sure that athletes get plenty of calories. Good carbs are preferable, but in general have the athlete eat whatever he/she enjoys to ensure that enough food is eaten.

### Three Categories of Good Carbs

**Fresh fruit** – pears and bananas are excellent, apples, strawberries, a little citrus (not great because of acid content), mangoes, grapes,

**Avoid:** watermelon, pineapple, tomatoes, fruit juices

**Vegetables** - any

**Avoid** - none

**Whole grains** (breads, rice, etc.) (Please note the difference between “whole grain” and “enriched wheat.” Wheat bread is better than white, but not as good as whole grain.) The less processing a food undergoes, the better. For example, oatmeal is a very good pre-game breakfast, but be sure to use 100% whole oats which provide energy over extended periods of time. Avoid instant oatmeal, instant rice, instant anything – it’s processed and becomes high-glycemic, increasing insulin and decreasing athletic performance. The longer it takes to cook, the more nutritious it is (e.g. rice should take between 45 to 55 minutes.)

### Sources of Carbs for Pre-Tournament Carb Loading

Any pasta, bread or rice, but preferably whole grain; sweet potatoes (baked, not boiled); quinoa; cous cous; potatoes (not french fries.)

### Good Immediate Post-Game Snacks

**(Good when just coming off the field, but shouldn’t replace meals.)**

- Bananas - The highly absorbable natural sugar content helps replenish energy. The potassium content helps muscles function properly.
- Banana Bread
- Raisins
- Dates
- Fruit smoothies
- Fruits (as specified in the “Fresh Fruit” category above)