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How do you need to make your meals if you are an elite athlete?

Here we arrived to the Champion’s eating plan. If you are an elite athlete, performance may be your bread-maker and nutrition is one important tool to win. Fueling your body right is a prerequisite for winning performance. This section will give you the nitty gritty of the HOW and with sample menu plan.

The rule of thumb learnt in the previous sections applies. Use the general method of the Food Distribution on the plate and consider the information in the following section to choose what to choose your foods before and after workout.

You need to remember that you may need to consume a lot more calories than a sedentary or even a person who does some fitness activity. If you are a playing any sports you are likely to be engaged in weight training and endurance trainings besides the actual game.

You need to match your intake of food to the expended energy on training. On days when you have two trainings you need more food, off days you need less food. This is very obvious.

How to time meals to training?

Pre-Workout Meal

A low GI meal prior to workout promotes stable blood sugar level. Consider eating all your carbohydrates from low GI foods, even if your workout is in the afternoon. The rice, potato, or bread or pastry items shall be mixed with fiber rich dhal. You may consider using more oatmeal, buckwheat, oat bran, lentil, beans or peas and an above the ground vegetable or a low GI fruit with your eggs, poultry, fish or meat for breakfast and lunch.

Keep the GI low for all meals and snacks to promote substantial fat use during low intensity endurance exercise. Allow two hours after a meal and ½ hour after a snack for digestion.

One handful of low GI fruit, grilled veggies, baked beans or oatmeal can keep you well-fueled and still use fat for your cardio workout. Including small amount of protein to the pre-workout meal has muscle-sparing effect during exercise.

To fuel high intensity aerobic exercise, athletes prior to competition may consume high GI foods 5-10 minutes before the event. The increased mental excitement of competition anxiety increases epinephrine and norepinephrine levels, which inhibits the ‘sugar spike’ prior to the race. Studies showed this phenomenon exist only with competition anxiety. Individuals participating in their regular workouts – with no competition anxiety – had normal blood sugar spike after consuming high GI foods

prior to exercise. Therefore consuming low GI meals prior to exercise is the best methods to keep blood sugar and energy level stable for optimal performance.

Post-Exercise Meal

Sufficient exercise load depletes carbohydrate stores. Exercising for 90 minutes will deplete your carbohydrate stores. Therefore, **consuming high GI food after exercise, esp. endurance exercise is the best way to restore carbohydrate (glycogen) storages. This is the time to consume potato, rice and refined grain products** in amounts corresponding to the length of your endurance exercise (the longer the exercise the more it depletes carbohydrate stores) The addition of high quality protein to post-exercise meals spares protein for muscle repair.

Eat **low GI carbohydrate for your last meal again**. This will help you to sleep well and provides your body with proper recovery, so your muscle and your brain can recover properly. Choose muesli or whole meal pastry for bed-time snack.

Eating 50% of your calories after 7pm considered night eating syndrome. If you eat too much at night it means that your body does not get enough calories during the day when it needs it. Eating too much at night **promotes fat gain**.

During Exercise

Individuals exercising for health and fitness reasons need only water during workout. Well-balanced meals prior to workout provide sufficient fuel when exercising less than 60 minutes. Keep your body hydrated by taking water and electrolyte drink in every 15 minutes.

The **body requires carbohydrate replacement when the exercise lasts longer than 90 minutes.** You will need a sport drink, which is a mix of carbohydrates and electrolytes and drink it every 10 minutes alternating it with water. Consider drinking 1L of fluid per hour of training.

How to make home-made sport drink

- 300ml of any flavored juice- best is grape, pine apple, mango
- 700ml water
- 3 tbs sugar
- 1 pinch Himalayan salt

Timing of meals to training sessions

Most athletes train at least twice a day. Since the weather is hot during the day the training times are early morning and afternoon.

Training before breakfast and in the afternoon

Remember to drink 200-300ml of water 10 minutes before any food.

Breakfast. If your training is early morning – right after awaking – you may not eat at all before you begin training. When this happens, drink water before and take a high GI carbohydrate (dates, figs, raisins, white bread jam sandwich) and electrolyte sport drink with you to drink it during the training. In this case your first meal is your breakfast. Remember that you need to reload your lost glycogen storage and

consume rice, potato, white flour based pastry and bread, fruits as watermelon, papaya is suitable for this time as fruit. All fruit juices are good after workout as well. Breakfast cereals made of rice and corn (coco puffs or corn flakes) are appropriate choice of carbohydrate with low fat milk after workout as well. Eat some protein (chicken eggs, tofu, whey protein drink etc) to speed your muscle recovery.

Lunch. Your next meal is a lunch, which will count as a pre-exercise meal again. Exchange at least half of your rice, potato and white flour based bread or pastry with oat, bran, lentil, beans, peas and pastry made of whole meal flour. Most athletes take a rest, nap after lunch to prepare for the afternoon training.

Afternoon snack. Since you ate your lunch 12-1 pm you need to regulate your blood sugar level at 3pm again. You are still pre-training state so you need to eat a low GI snack at this time. Have some berries, peach, orange, greenish banana, apple, pear, plums, cantaloupe. You may have a muesli bar and drink water with it. If there is only high GI cereal bars available (corn flakes or puffed rice) drink lemon water with it or eat half a grape fruit.

The afternoon workout times are around 4-5 pm till 6-7 pm. Remember to bring water or electrolyte sport drink with you and drink it during your training. If you do continuous running cycling, playing football or golf drink your carbohydrate sport drink to fuel your body properly. Two-hour skill training as in karate or gymnastics you will need to drink your sport drink, which will help you to concentrate well the entire time.

Dinner. Take your dinner as soon as possible after your afternoon training. Best would be to eat your dinner 7-7:30pm. Remember that your body needs fuel within 30 minutes of finishing your workout. Take your shower and go eat dinner immediately. If the place where you trained is further away you need to take a high GI snack with you, which contain some protein as well. A protein snack bar with a banana or with your sport drink can help you out this time, until you arrive back and able to eat dinner. Your dinner is your post exercise meal and consume high GI carbohydrate meals, just like you did for breakfast.

Bed time snack. This meal should be the same as your afternoon snack and keep it low GI so you can sleep well and your body can recover you after the hard work you did all day.

Training after breakfast and in the afternoon

Remember to drink 20-300ml of water 10 minutes before any food.

Breakfast is your first meal of the day and considered as a pre training meal. As hard it is you should get up on time to have at least one hour between breakfast and your training. As a pre-training breakfast you need to eat low GI carbohydrates mostly. Eat oatmeal, muesli instead of rice or corn cereal, eat more, lentil, beans, peas and whole meal bread, pastry like muffins. Eat less white flour based bread pastry, like croissant. Eat no potato and rice or just very little for breakfast if you are before your workout. Eat oatmeal instead of rice porridge or biryani.

Morning training. Workout times are around 9-10 pm till 11-12 am. Remember to bring water or electrolyte sport drink with you and drink it during your training. If you



do continuous running cycling, playing football and golf drink your carbohydrate sport drink to fuel your body properly. Two-hour skill training as in gymnastic, karate or taekwondo you will need to drink your sport drink, which will help you to concentrate well the whole time.

Lunch. Lunch is considered as your post exercise meal this time. Load up on high GI carbohydrate such as potato, rice, white flour based bread and pastry, fruits as watermelon, papaya is suitable for this time as fruit. All fruit juices are good after workout as well. Breakfast cereals made of rice and corn (coco puffs or corn flakes) are appropriate choice of carbohydrate with low fat milk after workout as well. Eat some protein (chicken, meat, fish eggs, tofu, whey protein etc) to speed your muscle recovery.

Since you ate your lunch 12-1 pm you need to regulate your blood sugar level at 3pm again. You are in pre-training state so you need to eat a low GI snack at this time. Have some berries, orange, greenish banana, apple, pear, plums, peach, cantaloupe. You may have a muesli bar and drink water with it. If there is only high GI cereal bars available (corn flakes or puffed rice) drink lemon water with it or eat half a grape fruit.

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Dinner. Take your dinner as soon as possible after your afternoon training. Best would be to eat your dinner 7-7:30pm. Remember that your body needs fuel within 30 minutes of finishing your workout. Take your shower and go eat dinner immediately. If the place where you trained is further away from the athlete’s cafeteria you need to take a high GI snack with you which contain some protein as well. A protein snack bar with a banana or with your sport drink can help you out this time, until you arrive back and able to eat dinner. Your dinner is your post exercise meal and consume high GI carbohydrate meals, just like you did for breakfast.

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