**FOOD AND DRINK FOR COMPETITION**

**THE WEEK BEFORE COMPETITION**

**DIET**
- Keep a regular, healthy diet. Focus on carbohydrate rich foods, with some additions of protein and a small amount of healthy fats. Ensure that your muscle glycogen stores are adequate by focusing on carbohydrate rich, low GI foods, at mealtimes, and have nutritious snacks throughout the day.
- Small, regular, healthy meals and snacks also stave off hunger, which may lead to impulse driven eating on unhealthy foods.

**HYDRATION**
- Stay well hydrated every day. Always try to keep a water bottle on hand, and fill it when it’s empty.

**THE DAY BEFORE COMPETITION**

**DIET**
- Ensure that your muscle glycogen stores are topped up by focusing on carbohydrate rich, low GI foods, at mealtimes, and have nutritious snacks throughout the day.
- Even if nerves affect your appetite, it is important to have a nutritious meal the night before a competition. Keep your evening meal light (Refer to “Food and Drink for Training” document for examples), and ensure that you don’t eat too much food. If you are too full, you can have difficulty sleeping, as well as feeling unwell before or during a competition.
- Avoid new foods. Stick to the types of foods that you would normally eat, especially those that you eat during training periods. New foods may negatively affect your stomach, and leave you feeling unwell.
- Stay away from heavy (rich/fatty) and gassy foods. Gas-producing foods such as lentils, beans, bran cereals, cruciferous vegetables (cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and broccoli) and spicy foods can leave you feeling uncomfortable before a competition. Heavy foods can be difficult to digest, provide little nutrition, cause discomfort, affect sleep and leave you feeling lethargic on the competition day. This is especially true for fried and fatty foods.
- Get organised. Make sure that you have a plan in place for what you are going to have or take with you for breakfast, as well as any snacks that you may need to pack or prepare. Ensure that you have a full water bottle (or two) handy.

**HYDRATION**
- Stay well hydrated during the competition. Always try to keep a water bottle on hand or nearby, and fill it when it’s empty. Be mindful about rehydrating immediately after an event, and especially on hot days.

**EXERCISE**
- Avoid very strenuous exercise that is likely to deplete glycogen stores and potentially bring on muscle breakdown, and protein depletion. Keep any training the day before a competition reasonably light.
THE DAY OF COMPETITION

DIET

- Ensure that you eat a carbohydrate rich meal (if 2-4 hours before an event), or snack (if closer to 1 hour before), that will top up liver glycogen stores are reduced during the overnight fast. (Refer to “Food and Drink for Training” document for examples)

- Combine your carbohydrate rich meal with some protein. This will ensure that you have enough protein in your body to reduce muscle breakdown during exercise, and it will help you to feel fuller for longer, so you are not hungry before or during an event, when you are unable to eat.

- The following are good sources of protein and other nutrients, delivering approximately 10g of protein:
  - 35g cooked lean beef/pork/lamb
  - 120g tofu
  - 60g nuts or seeds
  - 3 cups of cooked rice
  - 2 small eggs
  - 30g reduced-fat cheese
  - ¾ cups of cooked kidney bean/lentils
  - 1 cup of soy milk
  - 40g skinless cooked chicken
  - 1 cup of low-fat milk

- Avoid foods that are difficult to digest. Instead opt for:
  - Oatmeal
  - Toast
  - Cereal
  - Milk
  - Fruit
  - Yoghurt

- Have an eating strategy, and test it out during training sessions. This will discourage snacking on unhealthy foods, keep hunger at bay, and ensure that blood sugar levels remain normalised. Plan what you will eat before and after an event, as well as what to eat in-between events if there are multiple. If you are not competing until the end of the day, stick to the same eating schedule of a meal 2-4 hours before and a snack 1 hour before. Ensure that meals and snacks are:
  - Low GI carbohydrates
  - Low in Protein
  - Low in Fat
  - Low-Moderate Fibre
  - Not Spicy or Salty
  - Easy to Digest; Not Too Bulky or Filling
  - Enjoyable and Familiar
  - Include a drink (400-600 ml of water 2 hours before an event)

- If competing in multiple events, it will be necessary to refuel and rehydrate in between these events. Some ideas of foods and drinks that you can have between events are:
  - Bananas
  - Dried fruit
  - Smoothie
  - Sports drink
  - Yoghurt drink
  - Oatmeal biscuits
  - Breakfast cereal
  - Sandwich or roll with honey, jam or banana
  - Meal replacement shake
  - Rice cakes with banana or jam

HYDRATION

- Drink water first thing in the morning to replace fluid lost during the night. Ideally, you should aim to drink 400-600ml of water, spaced out over the 2 hours before a competition. This allows adequate time for the water to be absorbed by the body, and for any excess to be excreted.

- Aim to drink a further 125-250 ml of fluid 15-30 minutes before an event.

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REFERENCES


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