

## The Run-in to Competition

Accumulating fuel stores to be used in competition does not happen in just one meal. A process of regular meals and snacks spaced out over the days prior to competition should be followed rather than one large meal the night before competition as the increased load on digestion may interfere with sleeping patterns.

**Increasing hydration** through regular sipping on fluid and water in the lead up to competition is essential, even if you don't feel thirsty. A good test to judge hydration is urine colour; aim to have urine a light colour in the morning after waking and to run clear before bed.

### What should I eat when loading?

Food choices leading into competition should be **high in carbohydrates**, contain **some protein** and should be **low in fat**, especially saturated fats as these can be heavy and hard to digest.

Don't try any unfamiliar or unusual foods; eat food you would usually eat around training so you know that food sits well in your stomach when active.

### When should I eat?

**Start the loading process** around **24 hours before** competition begins. Determine the time competition starts then work backwards from this time to **plan** when and what meals should be consumed. eg; if competition starts at 2pm start loading at lunch the day before; if it's at 8am start loading at breakfast the day before and aim to eat every 2-3 hours.

### Meal suggestions around competition

#### **Breakfast\***

- Moderate to low fibre cereal (Special K, Weet-bix, Nutri-Grain...) with low fat milk and fruit OR
- Thick wholemeal toast with poached eggs and tomato and a piece of fruit or glass of juice

#### **Lunch\***

- Sandwiches on wholemeal or grain bread, lean meat or tuna and some salad but avoid fatty meats or spreads like butter or mayo OR
- Pasta with lean meat and veges in a low fat sauce

#### **Dinner\***

- Pasta dish with lean meat, a low fat sauce and some vegetables and crusty bread to serve OR
- Lean meat stir fry with steamed rice

\*this indicates the type of foods to consume, amounts will vary

### Competition day

On the morning of competition it is important to have a good breakfast; if competition starts early it may mean getting up a little earlier to fit in a substantial meal so it has time to digest.

#### **2-4 hours before competition**

Aim to have your last main meal so food has time to digest and the fuel is in your blood where it is most accessible. This meal should be as indicated above so it is healthy, balanced and fresh that way you won't feel weighed down.

#### **1 to 2 hours before competition**

Have a small snack *high in carbohydrates, low in fat and low in fibre* to reduce potential stomach discomfort and so food is digested quickly. This will top up energy stores and stop you feeling hungry, but not feel too full. This could be a banana or a jam/honey/vegemite sandwich on white bread.

#### **Less than 1 hour before competition**

Sip on water, or alternate between water and sports drinks if going into a high intensity or long duration event.

### Refueling for long or continuous competition

If competition has a long duration, or is conducted as regular efforts or heats, the body cannot store enough good energy to have easily accessible fuel for peak performance throughout the whole competition. Regular small snacks throughout the competition can top up energy levels between efforts or heats for a faster recovery rate and less overall muscle soreness without making to feel too full. Liquid meals or supplements including Sustagen, sports drinks or goos may be suitable to consume if food is not appropriate. Food choices that are easy to consume include low fat custard, yoghurt or creamed rice; honey or jam sandwiches or bananas.