What you eat day in and day out can have a big effect on how you perform. What you eat right before an event can be critical. Wrong choices can be disastrous. Right choices can give you that competitive edge. *The Pregame Meal Planner* is designed to help you make wise food choices.

**The Pregame Meal Planner**

*a guide for high school athletes*

While the pregame meal can supply your body with significant amounts of energy, don’t expect it to supply the bulk of the energy you will need for the event. You will need to eat the right kinds of food for several days before the event to charge up your muscles with glycogen. Glycogen is a key energy source your muscles use during most sport activities. While the pregame meal won’t cause large increases in muscle glycogen, it will:

- Help avoid hunger during the event.
- Provide a relatively empty stomach at game time.
- Stabilize blood sugar levels and add some food energy to complement existing energy stores of muscle glycogen.
- Prevent gastrointestinal upset or other adverse reactions to food.
- Hydrate the body (supply ample water to the body’s cells).

No one pregame meal is right for every athlete. But some food choices are a lot wiser than others. The general guidelines for individual food selection and meal planning are given on the following page. Make sure your pregame meal plans follow these guidelines. Review the videotape, *The Pregame Meal*, for the reasons behind the rules.
**PREGAME GUIDELINES**

- Allow enough time for digestion. The meal should be eaten at least three hours before the event.
- The meal should be high in starch. Starch is easy to digest and it helps steady the levels of blood sugar.
- Only moderate amounts of protein should be consumed. Protein foods take longer to digest than starch. And high-protein meals may lead to increased urine production and can add to dehydration.
- Fats and oils should be limited. They take too long to digest.
- Sugary foods should be restricted. Sweets can cause rapid swings in blood sugar levels and result in low blood sugar and less energy.
- Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine. Caffeine stimulates the body to increase urine output, which can contribute to dehydration problems.
- Watch out for foods that produce gas. Certain raw vegetables, fruits, or beans may cause problems for some young athletes. Be aware of the foods that cause you problems, and avoid them just before an event.
- Within these guidelines, choose foods you like to eat.

**SUGGESTED MEAL PLANS**

Here are some nutritious pregame meal plans that fit the guidelines. At least three of the major food groups are represented in each meal. These meals are only suggestions. You can probably think up many more that you would like to eat.

**Meal #1**
- Breakfast Cereal
- Banana Slices
- Milk
- Toast/Jam
- Pineapple Juice
- Water

**Meal #2**
- Chicken Noodle Soup
- Crackers
- Orange
- Lowfat Yogurt
- Water

**Meal #3**
- Poached Egg
- Toast/Preserves
- Milk
- Orange Juice
- Water

**Meal #4**
- Pancakes
- Applesauce
- Milk
- Grape Juice
- Water

**Meal #5**
- Turkey Sandwich
- Bread and Lettuce
- Apple
- Milk
- Tomato Juice
- Water

**Meal #6**
- Cottage Cheese
- Peach
- Breadsticks
- Milk
- Apple Juice
- Water

**Meal #7**
- Spaghetti/Tomato Sauce
- Bread
- Milk
- Orange Juice
- Water

**My meal**

1. Use lowfat or skim milk.
2. Juice of choice except prune juice.
3. Avoid highly sweetened cereals.
4. Limit butter and syrup.

If you need more information to help plan nutritious meals, get a free copy of *Don't Let Your Diet Let You Down - A Guide for High School Athletes*, U of I Circular No. 1044, at your local Cooperative Extension Service office.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foods</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pasta</strong></td>
<td>Macaroni, spaghetti, noodles, ravioli, etc. (plain or with sauce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Potatoes</strong></td>
<td>baked, boiled, mashed, <em>not french fries</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Starchy vegetables</strong></td>
<td>peas, carrots, winter squash, sweet potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breads</strong></td>
<td>rolls, muffins, crackers, quick breads, bagels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cereals</strong></td>
<td>oatmeal, other hot cereals, cold cereals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soups</strong></td>
<td>Noodle, rice, vegetable, clear broth, bouillon or consomme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pancakes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fruits, fruit juices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milk</strong></td>
<td>lowfat milk, lowfat yogurt, lowfat cottage cheese, lowfat cheeses, “shakes” made with lowfat milk or yogurt and fruit and/or juice, puddings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liquid meals in a can</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Comments**

Meats, cheese and oil add fat to the sauce. Use them sparingly.

Use a sauce low in fat and only as spicy as you can tolerate easily. Or try rice with a little soy sauce flavoring.

Limit butter, gravy, or sour cream.

Cooked vegetables are more easily digested.

Use nutritious, lowfat bread products and spreads.

Avoid cereals with high sugar content.

Choose lowfat soups. Eating large portions of chili, split pea, or bean soups may lead to digestive problems for some athletes.

Limit butter and syrup.

Use any juice or cooked fruit except prune.

Oranges, bananas, and peeled apples would be easily digested raw fruits. You may wish to dilute juices, especially in hot weather. Try hot cider or juice during cold weather.

Though not a substitute for solid foods in the daily diet, they are convenient for occasional pregame use. You can make liquid meals at home using the following recipe that makes about 1 quart:

1/2 cup of water
1/2 cup of nonfat dry milk
1/4 cup of sugar
3 cups of skim milk

Flavor with a teaspoon of vanilla or cherry extract.
# Foods to Avoid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candy, sugar, honey</td>
<td>After an initial rise, your blood sugar level can actually drop below normal, resulting in a sudden feeling of tiredness or fatigue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea, coffee, chocolate, cola</td>
<td>Caffeine leads to dehydration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried foods, high-fat meats, fats, oils, gravies, sour cream, etc.</td>
<td>Fat digests slowly and therefore stays in the stomach longer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some raw fruits, vegetables, popcorn, nuts, dry beans and peas.</td>
<td>Some of these foods may cause gas and/or an uncomfortable feeling of fullness during the game. An athlete needs to avoid the foods that give him or her problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any new food</td>
<td>Don't experiment with new foods right before an event. If you experience any adverse reactions, your body has little time to recover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit-flavored drinks and powdered drink mixes</td>
<td>Many drinks contain little fruit juice and a lot of sugar. Read the label.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## No Time?

Plan ahead to have your favorite quick pregame foods on hand during the season. If possible, eat at least three hours before your game.

- Ask your coach, food service director, or home economics teacher for refrigerator space if you need a pregame meal/snack right after school, between classes, or during a free period. A refrigerator and/or microwave would be a good Booster Club project.
- Ask for availability of nutritious vended foods: yogurt, fruit juices, etc.
- Bring a thermos of soup or casserole from home.
- If you only have time for a quick trip to the store, consider these possibilities:
  - Oranges, bananas, pears, peaches, plums
  - Juices
  - Mozzarella string cheese
  - Yogurt (lowfat)
  - Single-portion cans of fruit peaches, plums
  - Breadsticks/snacksticks
  - 100% fruit juice bars
  - Cottage cheese (lowfat)
  - Milk (lowfat or skim)

**REMEMBER:** Eat foods you like and that agree with you for pregame meals. You are an individual with your own tolerances for foods. Choosing foods you like may give you a psychological edge.

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Urbana, Illinois  
August 1987