# Pre – Event meal ideas and preparation tips

If you are a student athlete, coach, or parent trying to choose the right foods for pregame it can sometimes be a challenge for a variety of reasons. The following information provides tips and suggestions on what to choose and when.

* Game day nutrition begins 48 hours prior to activity and is most important 24 hours prior to your event!
* Pre-game meals should not be the time when you experiment new foods for the first time. Try things out prior to game day.
* Eat foods consisting of complex carbohydrates. Avoid high sugar/sweet foods with low nutrients and allow adequate time for the food to digest. The closer you get to your game/event the more carbohydrate it should contain.
* Avoid fatty foods as these can take up to 6 - 8 hours to digest. Which can also lead to less oxygen/energy available to working muscles as they are working to digesting the food in the stomach.
* Finally, avoid high fiber foods unless you know you tolerate them very well.
* You don’t want to be hungry or overfull during your sporting event, you should be focusing on your performance.

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| **Time before Event** | **Tips for success** | **Menu ideas for proper fueling** |
| The night before sporting event | Higher carbohydrate, lean protein, and lower in fat. No fried or fatty sauce type foods. | * Pasta with red sauce, lean meatballs, and steamed vegetables * Grilled lean protein like chicken breast, fish, lean beef/pork, baked potato or sweet potato, side salad * Healthy burrito/fajita - Brown rice, black beans, lean chicken, fish, or beef, with salsa, romaine lettuce, and cheese. * Soup(chicken noodle, bean, broth based) and baked potato/sweet potato, veggies or salad |
| Every 3 – 4 hours during the day, or if you have at **least 3 or more hours** before game/event | Ensures that you maintain your energy levels throughout the day and prepares you for your sporting event   * Choose a meal higher in carbohydrate, moderate in protein, and low in fat | * Oatmeal, berries, sliced almonds, Greek yogurt * Peanut Butter & Jelly OR lean turkey and cheese on whole grain bread, low fat milk, fruit * *Lean* burger or grilled chicken on whole grain bun with veggies or a side salad, low fat milk or yogurt, fruit * Spaghetti with tomato sauce and lean meatballs, side salad, LF milk, fruit * Lean protein like fish, lean beef/pork, chicken, baked potato or sweet potato, vegetables * Hummus, veggies, whole grain pretzels, LF milk, fruit * Sub sandwich with lean meats and cheese or a PB and J sandwich (or 2), baked chips or pretzels, LF milk, fruit * If you must choose fast food, see healthy “fast food choices” handout for restaurant options for this time frame. For pregame, sub sandwiches, bagel shops, and pasta or baked potato options would be better options however. * Limit salad only meals, these meals are healthy options normally but will not provide adequate energy to fuel exercise. |
| **1 – 2 hours till** game/event | Helps top off your fuel tank, but should be easy to digest and tolerated well   * 16 oz. of fluid 1 – 3 hours pregame | * Sports drinks (**not** energy drinks with caffeine) * Easy to digest fruit, i.e. banana, melon, etc. * Bread or bagels with jam or jelly * Granola bars or cereal bars – preferably lower sugar and fiber options * Yogurt (less dairy the closer you get to event) * Pretzels, crackers, graham crackers * Squeezable applesauce |
| **Less than 1 hour pre event** | Continues fueling and hydration process   * 8 oz. of fluid about 30 minutes prior to start | * Sports drinks (**not** energy drinks with caffeine) * Sports gels or beans * Easy to digest fruit, i.e. banana (some people may not tolerate this close to competition) * Bread (low fiber) with jam or jelly |
| Foods to limit pregame | The goal for pregame is having foods that are easy to digest and tolerated well prior to sporting events. Foods that are high in fat, excess protein, and fiber stay in the stomach longer. | * Avoid anything fried. * Avoid cream or cheese sauces as they are high in fat. Red/tomato/vegetable sauces are better choices over alfredo, butter, or cream/cheese sauces not only because of the fat content but the vegetables have nutrients in them that may assist with reducing inflammation. * Avoid garlic bread as it is usually soaked with butter. Go for the plain bread side. * Cream cheese and butter are high fat options with bagels. Switch it out for jam, all fruit, cinnamon sugar or honey. But if you choose to use it, small quantities only. * Cheese is high in fat, so watch out for dishes that contain a lot of cheese, like ravioli, burrito bowls, and pizza. * Hispanic foods pregame may be too high in fat and fiber as they usually contain, beans, cheese, guacamole, and sour cream. * Ideally limit dessert, but if it is going to be on the menu choose frozen yogurt instead of ice cream, cakes, or cookies. * Request to have sauces, dressings, and other condiments on the side. |
| The JV/Varsity time conundrum | Since JV usually plays before Varsity, they have less time available to digest foods. Below are some snack ideas to have on hand. | * Ideally the JV if they have less than 2 hours offer easy to digest snacks before and have the meal after the game * The Varsity could eat the meal before since they will have 2+ hours to digest and have snacks after to refuel. * Please remember if holding food to keep hot food hot and cold food cold, any of these foods in the temperature danger zone (40 – 140 degrees) for longer than 2 hours could cause foodborne illness and keep players off the field. * Try having these foods additionally on hand for the athletes   + Granola bars – low fat and fiber options   + Yogurt   + Fruits – ideally easy to eat, easy to digest options like ripe bananas, papayas, plums, nectarines, peaches and melons, such as watermelon, honeydew or cantaloupe.   + smoothies   + bagels   + Pretzels   + Cereal   + Low fat crackers   + Gatorade or similar (not the calorie free ones, but this is ONLY for pregame or during game) |

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