

Pre-event nutrition

What should I consume before exercise?

This will be individual to you, based on your likes and dislikes and how nervous you get before competition which may affect your appetite. Whatever you decide to have before an event, always try it out before competition day.

In general, small snacks and liquids are digested and absorbed within 1 – 2 hrs after ingestion, which is much quicker than a large meal, which can take 3 – 4 hrs or more. Aim to have your last 'main meal' 3 – 4 hrs before an event. This meal should be low in fat and fibre. Continue to top up your carbohydrate stores with smaller snacks and liquids nearer the event. This meal should be low in fat and fibre. Also remember to ensure you are well hydrated before you start exercise.

Pre-event ideas containing carbohydrate

When to take	Suggestions of what to take
1 - 2 hours before competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakfast cereal and low fat milk• Fruit or fruit smoothie• Jelly sweets• Liquid meal replacement product• Low fat, low fibre cereal bar or fruit bar• Low fat milk or milkshake• Sports drink, energy bars and gels• White bread and jam• Yoghurt or yoghurt smoothie
3 - 4 hours before competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baked potato with low fat filling e.g. tomato based sauce, cottage cheese and pineapple, ratatouille, tuna and tomato• Cous cous, noodles, rice, pasta or potatoes with lean meat / fish and vegetables• Sandwich / pitta bread / tortilla wrap / bread rolls filled with low fat filling e.g. ham and pickle, turkey and cranberry, salmon and cucumber• Toast or bagel with low fat topping e.g. poached / scrambled egg, low fat cheese, sardines, tinned ravioli / spaghetti

This information is taken from 'Fuel for Performance, Nutrition for Sport', a sports nutrition resource updated and revised by the following Welsh sports dietitians: Rhian Owen, Chris Cashin, Elaine Hibbert-Jones and Gill Regan. Every acknowledgement is given to all the sports dietitians who contributed to the original publication of this resource, which was first published in 1998.