


Nutrition Strategies: Pregame to Game Time

The pregame meal often comes 4 to 5 hours before the game, guaranteeing that you will arrive at the game with low blood volume, low blood sugar, and depleted liver glycogen unless you consume the right foods and beverages at the right times. Blood sugar is the primary fuel for the brain—if it drops, you can develop mental fatigue, which will lead to muscular fatigue even if your muscles are full of energy. However, if you start the game with food in your stomach, you will feel both bloated and nauseous, which will compromise your performance. Your goal is to consume enough energy and fluids at the times between the pregame meal and game time to assure that you step on the field optimally hydrated and with normal blood sugar, but with nothing left in the stomach that could make you feel queasy.

The strategies in the table on 441 will help assure that both your hydration and blood sugar are optimally satisfied, and that nothing will get in the way of you performing at your best.

Pregame meal	4 hours before game	3 hours before game	2 hours before game	1 hour before game	Game time
					
Familiar foods high in carbs, moderate in protein, low in fat, with lots of water. Avoid high-fiber foods. Don't avoid salt.	Occasional solid snacks high in carbs, low in protein, low in fat. Start sipping on sports beverage (1 to 2 mouthfuls every 15 minutes).	Occasional solid snacks high in carbs, low in protein, low in fat. Continue sipping on sports beverage (1 to 2 mouthfuls every 10 to 15 minutes).	Less occasional solid snacks high in carbs, low in protein, with no fat. Continue sipping on sports beverage (1 to 2 mouthfuls every 10 minutes).	Limited solid foods. Continue sipping on sports beverage (2 mouthfuls every 7 to 10 minutes).	Drink sports beverage at every opportunity. Limit consumption of plain water. Eat limited solid foods at halftime.
Examples					
Baked chicken breasts without skin, broiled lean steak with no visible fat and no sauce, or baked or grilled fish	Small servings of lean deli cut meats (lean turkey, lean roast beef, etc.)	Small servings of lean deli cut meats (lean turkey, lean roast beef, etc.) or lean deli sandwiches (small)	Small servings of lean deli cut meats (lean turkey, lean roast beef, etc.) or lean deli sandwiches (small)	Low-fat yogurt (if tolerated, and no closer than 30 min before game)	At halftime: Very small sandwich with 1 oz lean deli meat, or energy bar that is well tolerated
Mashed potatoes (easy on the butter!), baked sweet or white potato, no skin (easy on butter and sour cream!), rice, grits, bread, or pasta	Bagel, toast or bread, or saltine crackers	Bagel, toast or bread, or saltine crackers	Plain breads, Ritz crackers, pretzels, or cold low-fiber cereal with skim milk	Small amounts of plain breads, Ritz crackers, pretzels, or saltine crackers	At halftime: Plain crackers, plain breads, or CytoCarb complex
Cooked carrots, green beans, yellow squash, zucchini, collards (no raw vegetables or salads)	Bananas, apples, grapes (avoid all cooked and raw vegetables and beans)	Bananas, apples, grapes (avoid all cooked and raw vegetables and beans)	Bananas, apples, grapes (avoid all cooked and raw vegetables and beans)	Bananas or grapes (no closer than 30 min before game)	At halftime: Bananas, grapes, or yogurt-covered raisins