

## **FUELING FOR CROSS**

### **COUNTRY**

What you eat prior to a cross country meet or practice can make a big difference in how you perform and feel while running. It is important that you eat the right fuels prior to races and practices. Carbohydrate from sugar and starches is the source of energy that is instantly available when running. Fat and protein stay in the stomach for many hours while being digested, requiring a large blood supply to be sent to the stomach and intestines. Therefore the oxygen in blood needed for exercising muscles is not available after eating high fat and high protein meals and snacks. Athletes can feel nauseated and have less energy to finish the race when they eat high fat and protein meals before races. Also, foods that are high in fiber will keep your stomach full for a long period of time and can make you feel nauseated. After races and practices, you need to make up for not eating much protein and healthy fats and fiber, by having large portions of meat, vegetables, fruit, milk etc. You also have to restore the carbohydrates you used in racing by eating as much starchy foods and some sweets.

### **What should I eat to prepare for a race?**

**The goal is to eat as much low fat/high carbohydrate food as is comfortable and get well-hydrated.**

**Supper the Night Before** – Eat a high carbohydrate meal (Pasta Feed) such as potatoes and a meat, pasta with tomato sauce, rice and stir-fry vegetables and meats with milk, juice and a dessert. Vegetables and fruits are good the night before races. These foods help you store energy, and give you minerals (sodium, potassium etc.) you need to allow your heart and muscles to work optimally. Drink juices and as much water and milk as possible to make sure your urine is a pale yellow color.

**Breakfast** – Eat as much cereal as desired with fat free milk or a bagel with jelly, fruit juice and a low fat source of protein such as boiled eggs. Drink as much liquid as possible, and sip on water in the morning.

**Lunch** – Eat a sandwich on white bread with lean meats such as chicken, turkey, ham or roast beef (omit any cheese or peanut butter). Eat fruit and drink fruit juices. You may need to bring your lunch to school on race days if the School Lunch menu is something that is high in fat such as pizza, hot dogs, hamburgers etc. Do not eat something that has a lot of whole grains and raw vegetables. Do not drink low fat milk at lunch due to the fat it contains. Drink water and a Regular Sports drink.

**Snack Before the Race** – Eat crackers, pretzels, or fruit gels (low fat, starchy foods). **DO NOT EAT CANDY BARS, CHIPS or other fat-containing snack foods within 2-3 hours of a race.**

### **What should I eat after the race?**

The goal is to replace carbohydrates used while running and get nutrients that were omitted earlier in the day because they were too high in fiber or fat or protein.

**Within 30 minutes of the Race** – Eat a fruit juice popsicle to help cool you down. Wait 30 minutes to eat ice cream or raw fruit. Then try to eat foods with some protein and carbohydrates such as a recovery drink or chocolate milk. If your next meal will be delayed, eat granola bars, cookies, or crackers.

**Meal after the Race** – Eat a meal with as much meat, vegetables, potatoes or other starches and a dessert. Drink milk. Drink as much as possible to make sure your urine is a pale yellow before bedtime. To run your best, you must drink enough every day, and drink enough before practices and races, and drink enough afterwards to replace what you lost when running. Drink beverages that will help you to stay hydrated, not ones that make you feel sick or have a diuretic effect.

**WHAT should I drink to stay hydrated?**

**Daily Needs** - you should be drinking **water, juices and milk** to meet your general nutritional needs. Other beverages will not provide any nutrients your body needs, or will not do anything to improve your running and may even harm your performance.

**3-4 hours Before a XC Practice/ Race** - drink **water and a regular sports beverage ONLY** - No other fluids. The sports beverage gives you potassium and sodium that you will lose when sweating while running.

Do Not Drink before a practice or race	Why Not?
Pop	Carbonation makes you feel full, and you can't drink enough to meet fluid needs
Juice or beverages sweetened with sugar	Too much fruit sugar will pull water from your blood to your gut to dilute it. You will not have the fluid in your muscles, and you will feel bloated
Caffeine – coffee/tea/cola	Your kidneys use more body water to get rid of the caffeine than is in the beverage you drink (diuretic effect) so you end up with less fluid in your muscles
Milk	Stays in your stomach too long being digested, you may get nauseated
Zero calorie sports beverage	Does not provide any easily available energy source for your muscles; the % sugar in regular sports beverages is enough to keep you from feeling bloated

**HOW MUCH should I drink to stay hydrated?**

**Usual Fluid Needs** – Every day, most people need to drink about one ounce of liquid for every 2 pounds of body weight. Your urine will be a pale yellow color, no darker, if you are hydrated.

**Before XC practice or race** - Get hydrated by drinking water and a sports drink. You need 1 oz. per 10 lb. Drink only sips of water in the hour ½ hour before the race – just enough to keep your mouth moist.

Usual Body Weight	Minimum amount to Drink Everyday: total of Milk, juice and water	Amount Water to drink 3-4 hours Before Practice/Races (in school) 24 oz. bottle	Amount Sports Drink before Practice/Races (on bus or after school)
100	46 -50 oz. = 5 ½ to 6 cups	½ bottle	12 oz. bottle
110	50 -55 oz. = 6 ¼ cups	½ bottle	12 oz. bottle
125	57-63 oz. = 7 ½ cups	¾ bottle	12 oz. bottle
150	68-75 oz. = 8 ¾ cups	½ - ¾ bottle	20 oz. bottle
175	80-87oz. = 10 cups	½ - ¾ bottle	20 oz. bottle

200	91-100 oz. = 11 ½ cups	1 bottle	20 oz. bottle
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**After the XC Practice or Race** – Replace what you lost in sweating: Weigh yourself **before** a practice and **after** a practice to see how much this is for you. Drink 2 cups for every 1 lb lost. (2 lb = 4 cups or 32 oz.)