

## **Nutrition for sport – When and What to eat**

To get the best performance from the fuel you feed your body, consider the timing and content of our meals in relation to exercise.

### **Before exercise:**

Before participating in any activity that lasts for more than 60 minutes, it's important that your **glycogen** stores are as high as possible. You can build glycogen stores by carbohydrate loading.

At least 3-4 hours before exercise, eat foods you are used to and like (anything new will be a stress to your stomach) but:

**Include complex carbohydrates.** These release energy slowly. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains.

**Avoid simple carbohydrates.** These release energy quickly, giving you that burst of energy, but they also release insulin, a hormone that converts easily accessible sugar into glycogen stored in the muscles and liver. This release of insulin can continue to convert sugar in the blood to glycogen, taking your blood sugar level too low, and leaving you dizzy.

**Avoid fats and proteins.** These take longer to digest and may still be in your digestive system when you start your activity. Any blood flow being used in the digestive system is not blood flow sending much-needed oxygen to your muscles for activity.

### **During exercise:**

It is best to avoid solids during exercise, although a piece of fruit or a juice box at half time can give you an added burst of speed. Sports nutrition drinks that contain glucose, if your activity lasts more than a couple of hours, have proven to be beneficial. They should be consumed within 20 minutes of completion of an activity. This type of drink can give you added energy and replace valuable lost fluids.

### **After exercise:**

The first two hours after exercise are a crucial time for refueling your body. You need to replace the glycogen stores in your muscles so they continue to have an easily accessible source of energy. Even if you don't feel hungry, it is important to eat and replace glycogen.