

Nutrition for Fitness Competitions and Competitive Aerobics

Nutrition should be examined in two parts; in the basic training period and in the competition period.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The ideal athlete-type for fitness and aerobics competitions is fat-free, but also muscular. The strength that one needs in competition is relative strength; absolute strength in relation to athlete's body weight. Therefore the competitor should keep his/her body weight low, at least in the competition period.

Fitness & Aerobic Competitions are both a skill & power sport, in which both training's and competitions have a high intensity level. The body creates the needed energy mostly from carbohydrates. This means that competitor's meals should be rich in Carbohydrates. Competition does not consume very much energy, because the high-intensity periods are quite short in duration. An example; the 2 minute competition routine takes only appr. 30 kcal of energy .

The strength training puts its own demands to the intake need of proteins. The intake of proteins should be enough, but not too much. You must remember that the strength training for fitness and aerobic competition aims primary to make the nerve-muscle -system more effective, not to build muscles bigger (muscle hypertrophy). Too big muscles are no advantage in fitness and aerobics; appr. 1,5 grams protein per one kg of bodyweight per day is certainly enough.

Body weight control is executed by regulating the intake of fats. All visible fat should be removed, for example in chicken there is much fat under the skin, which must be taken away. From the many alternatives one should always choose fat-free or low-fat version.

GETTING READY FOR COMPETITION

The most important part of the preparation for a competition is the control over the fluid-balance. The importance of the fluid-balance is high in conditions where there is a danger of negative fluid-balance (high temperature in the competition hall, long flights, air-conditioning in hotel rooms, anxiety in competitions...). The intake of fluids (drinking) should happen long before the event. One should never trust in the feeling of thirst, because that always comes with a delay. A proper amount of fluids is 1-2 dl every 15 minutes. Cool drinks (10-13 degrees of Celsius) are absorbed most effectively. The intake of fluids is like tightrope walking, one should drink enough but too not much to avoid the unpleasant feeling in the stomach. Avoiding diuretics is also one part of fluid-control. Soft drinks (like Coca Cola), coffee and alcohol dehydrate the body. These drinks are not recommended before competition.

In order to optimise the performance in the competition you must make sure your blood sugar level is ideal.

Have a maltodextrin-drink 90 minutes before competition. In maltodextrin the carbohydrates are in the right form. Eating too close to the competition takes blood away from muscles to stomach. Especially right before competition one should be careful with candies (e.g. chocolate bars), they may lead to insulin reaction that is bad to the performance.

Tactic 1: Eat a Variety of nutritious Food

Tactic 2: Enjoy Healthy Eating

Tactic 3: Eat more Go Foods

Tactic 4: Go Slow on the Fats

Tactic 5: Eat Enough Grow Foods

Tactic 6: Eat Plenty of Glow Foods

Tactic 7: Eat Plenty of Calcium Rich Foods

Tactic 8: Eat more Iron Rich Foods

Tactic 9: Drink more Fluid

Tactic 10: Recovery

Tactic 1: Enjoy a Wide Variety of Nutritious Foods

It is important to choose healthy foods most of the time from all of the food groups, that is rice, breads and other cereals, fruits, and vegetables, meat, fish, pulses, yoghurt, milk and cheese, and fats and oils. This helps us get enough nutrients to keep us healthy.

Tactic 2: Enjoy Healthy Eating

Eating is also a pleasure and it is important that we have a balanced approach to what we eat. For special occasions eat some "go slow" foods, but try not to have too many.

Tactic 3: Eat More 'Go' Foods

Carbohydrates are the best fuel for your active body, just like petrol is the best fuel for a car. That's why we call the "Go" foods.

Carbohydrates are stored in your muscles as glycogen and supply your body with energy. They fuel your muscles so that you can run, vault and somersault, and they also fuel your brain so that you can think and concentrate. When you don't eat enough carbohydrate-rich foods, you will feel very tired and find it hard to do all of the things you want to do. The following foods are all rich in carbohydrates;

Rice (brown and white)

Fruit (fresh, canned or dried)

Legumes (lentils and baked beans)

Yoghurt and Milk

Potato, Pumpkin, Corn, Peas

Rice Cakes, Bread, Crispbreads, Breakfast

Cereal

Pasta, Noodles

Sugar is also a carbohydrate but not as nutritious as those listed above. The way to eat sugar is to use small amounts with other carbohydrate-rich foods, for example, spread jam on rice cakes or make a creamy rice dessert with fresh berries and save your soft drinks and lollies for recovery after competition.

For energy for training, eat meals containing rice or pasta. Both are great sources of carbohydrate and are low in fat.

Tactic 4: Go Slow on the Fats

Fats and oils are essential for a healthy body. Fat from foods provides your body with some important vitamins. These include: vitamin A, D, E and K. These vitamins all play a very special role in keeping your body healthy and working properly. So it is important that you include some fats and oils in your diet.

Foods that are high in fat include:

Butter and Margarine

Potato crisps and corn chips

Deep fried foods such as chips, dim sims,
battered fish and spring rolls

Pasteries such as pies, pasties and sausage rolls

Fat on meat and skin on chicken

Cream

Salad dressings and mayonnaise

Chocolate

Cakes, sweets biscuits and donuts

Tactic 5: Eat Enough Grow Foods

Protein is another important nutrient required by healthy athletes. Your hair, skin, blood, bones and muscles are all made of protein. To keep these strong and healthy. it is important to eat enough protein. You should try to include one food at every meal that is a protein rich food. For example: yoghurt for breakfast; baked beans for lunch; and chicken for dinner.

Foods that include protein are:

Beef, pork, lamb and veal

Chicken, Turkey and fish

Milk, eggs and cheese

Yoghurt and drinking yoghurt

Nuts and peanut butter

Legumes (lentils and baked beans)

Seeds

Tactic 6: Eat Plenty of Glow Foods

Vitamins are substances in food that you cannot see, but are very important for a healthy athlete. they help you to use carbohydrates for energy, keep your bones strong, your hair shiny, your skin healthy, and your vision.

Tactic 7: Eat Plenty of Calcium-rich foods

It is important that your diet supplies you with calcium to help your bones grow and be strong. Calcium also helps your muscles work properly. If you do not have enough calcium in your diet, your bones may be weak and fracture more easily.

The best sources of calcium in the diet are dairy products including milk, yoghurt and low fat cheese. You should aim to eat at least 3 serves of these foods every day. Other good sources of calcium are: canned fish with edible bones, such as sardines and salmon, green leafy vegetables, nuts and seeds.

Tactic 8: Eat More Iron-Rich Foods

Iron is a mineral found in your blood that carries oxygen around your body. It is essential for maximising your energy levels. A lack of iron can make you feel tired and weak and will affect your training and performance.

The richest sources of iron in the diet include liver and lean red meat. Other good sources of iron are green leafy vegetables such as spinach, legumes, including lentils and baked beans, eggs and some breakfast cereals. However, your body doesn't absorb the iron from these foods well. Eating foods that supply vitamin C with these iron rich foods, will help you absorb the iron. For example, strawberries on your breakfast cereal or tomatoes with your spinach will increase your body's absorption of the iron.

Tactic 9: Drink More Fluid

Did you know that half of your body's weight is made up of water? If the fluid level in your body drops because you forget to drink during the day or sweat a lot during training, you may be at risk of dehydration which will affect your performance.

A dehydrated athlete will feel hot, tired and zapped of energy and may get muscle cramps.

The best way to avoid dehydration is to drink plenty of water throughout the day especially during training sessions. Carrying your own drink bottle provides easy access to water. Remember to not only drink when you're thirsty - by then it's too late.

Tactic 10: Recovery

to help your body recover from each training session, it is important that you have a recovery plan.

Your recovery plan should include eating some carbohydrates as soon as you finish training. This will help you to replace the carbohydrate in your muscles (ie.glycogen) that you used during training. If you do not do this, you will feel tired tomorrow at training, and more tired the next day, and by the end of the week you will be running on empty.

After a tough training session or competition it's important to eat the correct foods to allow the body to recover. Banana and honey sandwich, fruit and plenty of water are excellent sources of recovery food.

Eating Before the Competition

This meal should be eaten about two - three hours before your competition starts. This will give the food time to digest. Your pre-competition meal should be low in fat and high in carbohydrate. You should also eat something that you know you like. Don't try new foods before a competition.

Connie Garner – Miss World Fitness & Miss Fitness Australia Champion

Suggested pre-competition meals:

Breakfast cereal, low fat milk and fruit

Toast, muffins or crumpets with honey or jam

Bowl of steamed rice and stir fry vegies

Low fat smoothie

Bowl of fresh fruit salad

Rice cakes topped with honey or jam, sliced banana, tomato, or spaghetti

And remember to drink a couple of glasses of water or fruit juice

Eating During the Competition

During the competition it is important to regularly sip on your drink bottle to reduce your risk of dehydration. You may also need to top up your blood sugar levels. Try drinking a sports drink or snack on rice cakes, fruit, low fat muesli bars or jelly confectionary.

Eating After the Competition

After the competition eat in moderation, have a treat, reward yourself but don't over do it.

TRAIN WITH DESIRE, DESIRE TO BE BETTER TOMORROW THAN YOU ARE TODAY!

