



Nutrition Tips for Youth and Junior Racers Doing St. Anthony's Meek & Mighty Triathlon

St. Petersburg's Jennifer Hutchinson, a USA Triathlon Elite Level 3 Coach and a registered dietitian / board certified sports dietitian, offers a wealth of nutrition tips for youth and junior racers to help them fuel up for race day in the weeks before, the day of and after the race.

Jennifer says, just like your favorite sports car needs gas, your body needs fuel, too. That's where your choice of foods and drinks (your "gas") can help you go fast and feel good. Try to keep poor food choices from slowing you down. Remember, the food you eat not only gives your body energy to train, but also gives you energy to have fun and continue to grow.

Day-to-Day Nutrition

What are elements of a healthy diet for youth and juniors?

Aim for daily intake of wholesome fresh foods. These include daily servings of: low-fat dairy (or dairy alternate that is calcium-enriched), whole grain breads, cereals, colorful fruits and vegetables, nuts and nut butter, and beans and lean meats (for iron).

- Carbohydrate rich foods: Whole grains such as oatmeal, brown rice, bread, crackers, pretzels, cereal; fruits (fresh, canned packed in juice, dried); beans; potatoes; and low-fat dairy (milk, yogurt).
- Protein rich foods: Leans meats (chicken, turkey, fish, pork, lean beef); eggs; low-fat dairy (cottage cheese, yogurt, milk).
- Sources of healthy fats: Nuts/seeds (almonds, walnuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds); peanut butter; almond butter; and olive oil

Eat at regular intervals. Eating every two to four hours ensures that you have consistent energy and gives your body nutrients to repair muscles after training and racing.

Eat balanced meals and snacks. The goal is for your food (or combination of foods) to provide carbohydrate, protein, and fat.

Get adequate fluids. Youth and juniors should be drinking regularly throughout the day. Water should be the main liquid choice to quench thirst, however 100% fruit juice, low-fat milk or soymilk, and even an occasional sports drink all can help keep the body hydrated.



Need some ideas for healthy, easy to pack snacks?

Bananas or any other fresh fruit; dried fruit (like raisins); peanut butter crackers; peanut butter and jelly sandwiches; trail mix; fig cookie bars; graham crackers; granola or cereal bars; oatmeal cookies; snack-size bags filled with almonds/sunflower seeds; 100% juice boxes; or milk-based pudding packs. Cold foods such as yogurt, string cheese, and chocolate milk can be easily packed in a small insulated bag with an ice pack or a small frozen water bottle or juice box.

Race Nutrition

The Week Before:

Race week is the time to rest and let your body store energy for race day. Food choices at this time are no different than during training. You may actually eat a bit less since you are not training as much. There is no need to carb load your plates. Just eat sensibly and to the point of being satisfied, but not stuffed.

The Day Before:

Most of the energy used during the race comes from what you ate the day before. The main points to remember are:

- Eat regular meals and snacks.
- Avoid high-fat or spicy foods.
- Avoid eating or drinking anything new.
- Include some salty snacks if race conditions are going to be hot.
- Eat a bedtime snack (similar to breakfast) if you normally do not eat much in the morning.

Ideas for lower fat/higher carbohydrate balanced pre-race meals?

Grilled chicken sandwich with small salad; chicken stir fry with rice; roast beef, turkey or ham sandwich with a small bag of baked chips or pretzels; baked/grilled chicken or fish with baked potato/vegetables; spaghetti with meat sauce or meatballs; cheese pizza; cheese, chicken or beef quesadilla (avoid spicy salsa). You can always add a fresh fruit cup, small salad, and low-fat milk or 100% juice

Race Day

Don't start the race with an empty fuel tank. What you choose to eat or not to eat before your race can make a big difference on how your race goes. The perfect pre-race fueling plan is something you can develop as you get more experienced in the sport.



When should you eat?

Eat your main pre-race meal two to four hours prior to the event.

If you are nervous or don't feel hungry try a small snack one to two hours before the race. Sometimes liquid energy from juices or smoothies work well one to two hours before the race start.

What should you eat?

Your meal or snack prior to the race should contain carbohydrate-rich foods, but should be low in fat.

For morning races, good choices may include: oatmeal with milk; pancakes or waffles; cereals with milk or yogurt; bagel or toast with peanut butter; or fruit with yogurt. For afternoon races, a small sandwich or repeat what you had for breakfast (since most breakfast foods are high in carbohydrates).

Select food and/or drinks that you have tried before that you know will not give you an upset stomach.

How much should you eat?

This depends on your body size and how long your race will be. Youth and junior races last from 30-60 minutes. Most of the energy used for the race is already stored in the body from meals eaten the day before. It's best to keep food portions more "snack size" until after the race is complete.

Race Day Nutrition Don'ts

- Don't skip breakfast. Starting a race after not eating for a long period of time will most likely cause you to slow down later in the race.
- Don't eat a large meal just prior to racing. A large meal will sit in the belly longer and can cause you to feel uncomfortable when trying to race hard.
- Don't eat fried, high-fat or spicy foods.
- Don't try any new foods on race day. Try new foods during training days only.

Hydration

Not drinking enough before, during and after training or races places you at risk for dehydration. Because young bodies are not as efficient in handling the heat, proper hydration is very important if you want to race your best.

Hydration Tips:

- Maintain daily hydration practices, especially when training and racing in hot and humid conditions or hot and dry conditions at altitude.
- Pre-race: Drink 4-8 oz. water or sports drink 30 to 60 minutes before race start.

- During the race: 4-6 oz. every 15 minutes, if possible.
- Post-race: 16 oz. of water or sports drink within 30-60 minutes of finishing.



Nutrition Recovery (Post race)

- Consume adequate fluids. The volume or amount is more important than timing. Choose a sports drink for races longer than one hour.
- Eat and drink carbohydrate-rich, protein containing foods and fluids as soon as possible. The first 30 minutes after the event is when muscles are most ready to refuel.
- When consuming your next full meal, be sure to include ample amounts of fruits and vegetables. Dark green, yellow, red, and orange fruits and vegetables are good sources of antioxidant nutrients, which may assist with the recovery process.

Good nutrition is a science, but it's not rocket science, so learn as much as you can. Don't sell yourself short by filling up on junk. Learning how to make good food choices will help you finish strong.

To learn more, visit Jennifer's Facebook page, IronClad Nutrition and Coaching at:

<https://www.facebook.com/IroncladCoaching?ref=hl>

For registration for all the races, visit www.SATriathlon.com; or call (727) 953-9005. For more details about the 2014 races, athletes can also visit St. Anthony's Triathlon's Facebook page: [facebook.com/stanthonystriathlon](https://www.facebook.com/stanthonystriathlon).