CHARLOTTE HEAT TRACK CLUB

ATHLETE NUTRITION & MEET-DAY PREPARATION GUIDE

FUEL YOUR BODY. PREPARE YOUR MIND. PERFORM YOUR BEST.

Proper nutrition, hydration, rest, and preparation are important parts of athletic development. What athletes do outside of practice can have a direct impact on their energy, focus, recovery, and overall performance.

This guide provides general recommendations to help athletes and parents prepare for practices and competitions. Every athlete is different, and nutritional needs vary based on age, activity level, health, and individual circumstances.

1. PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents and guardians play an important role in helping athletes arrive prepared and ready to compete.

- Arrive at meets on time and prepared for scheduled events.
- Eat balanced meals and maintain proper hydration.
- Get adequate sleep before competitions.
- Pack appropriate snacks, meals, and water for long meet days.
- Follow the competition schedule and listen to coaching instructions.
- Communicate any food allergies, dietary restrictions, or relevant nutritional concerns.

2. THE WEEK OF THE MEET

Preparation should begin several days before competition.

- **Hydration:** Encourage athletes to drink water consistently throughout the day. Bring a refillable water bottle to practices and competitions. Pay extra attention to hydration during hot weather and extended outdoor meets. Do not wait until an athlete feels thirsty to begin drinking. Avoid excessive fluid intake; hydration needs vary by athlete.
- **Nutrition:** Maintain regular meals rather than skipping meals. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sources. Avoid experimenting with unfamiliar foods immediately before competition. Limit excessive consumption of sugary drinks and heavily processed foods.

3. THE NIGHT BEFORE A MEET

A good night's rest and a balanced dinner help athletes prepare for competition.

- **Sleep:** Teen athletes should generally aim for 8–10 hours of sleep. Younger school-age athletes may need 9–12 hours. Establish a consistent bedtime and avoid staying up late. Reduce screen time before bed when possible.
- **Dinner:** Choose a balanced meal that includes complex carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, potatoes, or whole grains; moderate portions of protein such as chicken, fish, lean meat, beans, or tofu; fruits and vegetables; and water or another appropriate beverage.
- Avoid unusually large meals or foods that may upset your athlete's stomach.

4. THE MORNING OF THE MEET

Athletes should eat breakfast before competition rather than arriving on an empty stomach.

Recommended breakfast options include:

- Oatmeal with fruit.
- Whole-grain toast.
- Pancakes or waffles.
- Grits.
- Bananas or other fresh fruit.
- Yogurt.
- Eggs, if tolerated.

Allow enough time for digestion before competition. A larger meal is generally best eaten approximately 2–4 hours before an event. If an athlete needs something closer to competition, choose a smaller, easily digested snack.

5. PRE-COMPETITION MEALS

For meals approximately 2–4 hours before an event, consider the following:

- Higher in carbohydrates for energy.
- Moderate in protein.
- Lower in fat to help with digestion.
- Familiar foods that the athlete tolerates well.
- Appropriate fluid intake.

Meal examples: Chicken and rice; pasta with a light sauce; oatmeal and fruit; a turkey sandwich; or toast with fruit.

6. SNACKS FOR ALL-DAY MEETS

Track meets can last several hours. Parents should pack a variety of snacks that are easy to carry, digest, and eat between events.

Recommended snack options:

- Bananas, grapes, oranges, and apples.
- Raisins and other dried fruit.
- Watermelon and other cut fruit kept properly chilled.
- Crackers and pretzels.
- Bagels and muffins.
- Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, if there are no allergy concerns.
- Granola bars and fig bars.
- Yogurt, kept refrigerated.
- Cheese and whole-grain crackers, kept properly chilled.

Important: Athletes should have access to water throughout the meet. For extended, intense activity in hot conditions, an electrolyte-containing sports drink may also be appropriate. Energy drinks are not recommended for youth athletes.

7. POST-COMPETITION RECOVERY

Recovery begins when an athlete finishes competing. Proper nutrition and hydration help replenish energy and support muscle recovery.

After competition, encourage athletes to:

- Drink water and replace fluids lost through sweating.
- Eat a carbohydrate-rich snack or meal.
- Include protein to support muscle repair and recovery.
- Continue eating balanced meals throughout the day.

Recommended recovery foods: Fruit and yogurt; peanut butter and banana sandwich; chocolate milk, if tolerated; chicken, rice, and vegetables; eggs and whole-grain toast; lean meat, fish, beans, or other protein sources.

A balanced dinner after competition should include carbohydrates, protein, vegetables, and fluids.

8. WHAT TO PACK FOR MEET DAY

Parents should make sure their athlete arrives with the essentials needed for a full day of competition.

- Plenty of drinking water.
- Healthy snacks and meals.
- Electrolyte beverages when appropriate.
- Cooler with ice packs for perishable foods.
- Fresh fruit.
- Extra food for extended meet schedules.
- Sunscreen and weather-appropriate clothing.

A FINAL REMINDER FROM CHARLOTTE HEAT

Athletic development does not stop when practice ends. Rest, nutrition, hydration, preparation, and recovery are all part of becoming a stronger, healthier, and more complete athlete.

WE DON'T HOST TRYOUTS. WE DEVELOP ATHLETES.

Developing Athletes. Building Character. Creating Opportunities.