

What to Eat Before a Football Game

When athletes are preparing for a competitive game such as football, sports nutrition is something that could easily be forgotten. However, proper nutrition is what provides the body with the necessary nutrients to perform at high levels of competition. What to eat, how much to eat and how long to let the food digest are all aspects of nutrition that football players need to take into account.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates fuel the muscles and are needed when the large muscles of the body are involved with extensive physical activity. Carbs are stored in our muscles in the form of glycogen and can remain in the body for 12 to 24 hours after consumption. Therefore, foods that contain carbohydrates are the best type of food for athletes to consume before a football game. Eating foods such as fruits, pasta, breads and juices the night before will provide beneficial nutrients for the athlete to compete. A bagel or muffin with peanut butter or jelly a few hours before kickoff is enough to get most athletes through the competition successfully. Other good choices for pregame meals are cereals, rice, yogurt, granola and honey.

Digestion

Foods that contain carbohydrates digest fairly quickly when compared to other food groups. They digest much quicker and easier than proteins or fats, and that is why carbohydrates are good to consume before a football game. According to Cyosports.org, a pregame meal one to three hours before the game is the best time to eat a small meal. The football player should provide his body at least an hour to digest the food; therefore, his body would not be weighed down by excess, undigested food. A heavier meal containing a high amount of carbohydrates should be consumed the morning or night before the competition. This gives the body plenty of time to digest while storing plenty of energy in the muscles to be used during the game.

Proteins and Fats

These types of foods are good to consume after a competitive game; however, if consumed before a game they could drain energy because of the metabolic effort needed for digestion. They take longer for the body to digest and can lead to the athlete feeling tired or lethargic during competition.