

## Practical Nutrition Recommendations for Traveling Athletes

Günay Eskici\*

Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Canakkale, Turkey

\*Corresponding Author: Günay Eskici, Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Canakkale, Turkey.

Received: November 14, 2019; Published: December 23, 2019

### Abstract

Travelling is inevitable for most athletes. Many changes (such as climate, time) brought about by travel affect the athlete's nutritional status and this is reflected in his performance. There are some points need to be considered to be least affected by travel in long or short trips. In this article, practical nutritional recommendations are presented to help traveling athletes to be minimally affected by the current changes.

**Keywords:** Nutrition Recommendations; Traveling Athletes

### Introduction

Athletes often travel in the country and abroad. Although short distances are not very effective, long distances can adversely affect the athlete's performance, nutrition and psychological status due to both climate changes and road fatigue [1]. Maintaining good eating habits during the journey may affect the athlete's health and success [2].

Nutritional advice during travel varies according to individual and sport type (cyclists, skiers, wrestlers, etc). Regardless of where and how it is important to maintain the athlete's healthy diet content and training [2]. Whether traveling overseas or a 2-hour trip, it is important to make a nutritional plan for the destination. While traveling; mealtime, type, volume and contents of consumed foods, water balance, training time and frequency vary. This situation changes the athlete's diet. The most important element for a traveling athlete; meeting nutrient requirements, ensuring adequate hydration and food safety [1,3].

It takes time to adapt to a new place. In order to allow the body to adapt to changes in the destination, it is useful to travel to the destination a few days in advance, so that sufficient time is provided. Climate change is an important issue that affects the athlete's performance. This is especially important if the athlete is going to a warmer place than where he or she is doing routine training. Physiological adjustment takes place in 7 - 14 days. Failure to achieve heat adaptation affects performance. Nutrition and timing are the keys to success [4].

### Nutrition recommendations before traveling

- Information on the nutrition of the destination should be obtained in advance. Before leaving home, the food sources, eating habits and available foods of the destination should be investigated. This research is important in terms of taking nutrients that cannot be supplied at the destination. The internet, travel agencies and athletes who have previously traveled to the same area are good sources of information about where and what to eat [2,3].

- The plan should be made regarding the place to travel, the place to stay and the time. If staying in the house, kitchen cabinet must be filled according to the preferences of the person. If staying at the hotel, the refrigerator must be refilled according to one's wishes [3].
- Nutritional needs should be considered and a nutritional plan should be made. Many countries take dietitians and cooks in large organizations. Such an approach is beneficial for the athlete to eat healthier and to solve the problems that may arise [5].
- It should be negotiated with hotels and restaurants in the destination. Information should be provided about the timing of the meals and the needs of the menus by contacting the people who will organize the meals at the place of travel. For travel, a nutritional plan should be prepared to make the best use of existing foods (airline foods, restaurants on the road) and snacks to take with them [6].
- Place, time and where to eat should be planned in advance. It is important to consume foods similar to those eaten at home. For each day, when, where and what to be defeated should be planned in advance [1,3].
- If traveling by air, a special order can be given to the airline. The airline company can order a vegetarian menu, high-carb, low-fat, fruit and vegetable-rich specialty food. Also, the restaurant lists at the airports can be found by looking at the web site and information can be obtained from the restaurants. If the desired food is not offered at the airport or the airline company, packaged foods should be prepared for travel [7-9].

### Nutrition recommendations when travelling

It is very important for athletes to choose healthy food during travel, as travel affects the diet plan and program before the competition. Unexpected and undesirable conditions during travel, such as an exploding wheel or delayed flight, can cause the athlete to miss a meal and easily affect his performance. Regardless of where and how it is important to maintain the athlete's healthy diet content in the journey. Unlike normal individuals, athletes need more fluid and energy. Therefore, it is beneficial to feed athletes every 3 - 4 hours while traveling. When the last meal is eaten at home, the next meal will be on the bus, on the plane or at the hotel [2].

Any meal, from vegetarian to country-specific dishes can be ordered to the airlines, with 24-hour notice. However, sometimes the timing and suitability of the food rather than the choice of food forces athletes. The snacks during the day are of great importance for most athletes in refueling. However, it may not be possible to stop every 3 hours while traveling and find suitable snacks. Therefore, it is important for athletes to carry portable, healthy and nutritious snacks with them during travel, or to collect cold drinks or foods (sandwiches, fruit, yogurt) when a break is given [7].

Both short trips and travel by air (considering the risk of delayed flight), the food recommendations of the athletes that are suitable for the consumption of the athlete are as follows [5,8,9]:

- Bread, biscuits, crackers
- Cake
- Tahl breakfast cereals
- Low-fat milk
- Bottled water
- Powdered sports drinks and liquid meal supplements
- Canned vegetables

- Bottle, can or canned juice
- Canned fruits, dried fruits
- Canned Meal
- Nuts
- Patates baked potatoes
- Energy bars, granola bars

Travel usually involves traveling in air-conditioned cars and airplanes and staying in air-conditioned hotel rooms. These environments cause invisible fluid losses and trigger dehydration. Even water loss of 2% of body weight adversely affects the athlete’s performance [2].

The incidence of sore throat and respiratory diseases increases in athletes who do not compensate for fluid loss. Therefore, it is important to keep the mouth and throat moist. Drinking bottled water and sports drinks during the flight is beneficial. Athletes should be advised to drink 1 cup (1 cup/hour) of liquid for each hour in the air. Athletes should be informed that alcohol and caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea and cola) increase dehydration and fruit juices, milk, water and decaffeinated beverages help prevent dehydration [1,5,7,9].

In recent years, meals at the airports have been organized by working dietitians and expert cooks [10] and meal planning for athletes has been made by experienced sports dieticians [11].

Meal	Food Choices
Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose dry or cooked cereals, juices, fresh fruits, waffles, French toast, and/or pancakes.</li> <li>• Keep margarine and butter to a minimum.</li> <li>• Order skim milk and low-fat yoghurt.</li> <li>• Bagels and muffins with small amounts of peanut butter and jam are good choices as well.</li> <li>• Omelets made with egg whites are fine, but go easy on the heese. Ask for vegetable fillings instead.</li> </ul>
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to frequent restaurants that have low-fat sandwiches made from poultry or lean meats. Low-fat tuna salads may be available. Go easy on the cheese, and ask for extra vegetable toppings whenever possible.</li> <li>• Choose salads that include lean protein, or choose baked potatoes or chili.</li> <li>• A regular-sized hamburger or cheeseburger is fine, but split a small order of French fries with a teammate.</li> </ul>
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose lean meat, fish, or poultry that is broiled, grilled, baked, or blackened.</li> <li>• Ask for potatoes rice, pasta or noodles to be prepared with less than the usual amount of fat.</li> <li>• Order your salad with dressing on the side.</li> <li>• Consume bread and rools, but go easy on the margarine or butter.</li> <li>• Have fruit for dessert whenever possible.</li> </ul>
Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try fresh or dried fruit, granola bars, and energy bars.</li> <li>• Buy milk chugs and low-fat yoğurt whenever possible.</li> <li>• Snack on low-fat crackers, instant soups, and pretzels.</li> <li>• Drink water and other fluids.</li> </ul>

**Table 1:** Meal and snacks choices while traveling [8].

Complex carbohydrate sources, lean protein and low-fat foods served on board are good choices. For example, baked chicken meat (with lemon juice/vinegar and oil) potatoes stuffed with vegetables (melted cheese on top) and salads containing corn, rice, beans, tomatoes and chicken meat may be preferred [7]. Table 2 shows the percentages of energy from carbohydrates, protein and fat for snack foods that can be consumed during travel.

Food	Approximate energy substrate distribution <sup>1</sup>		
	% carbohydrate	% protein	% yağ
Bagel	76	14	10
Breadsticks	76	13	11
Breakfast cereal,unsweetened (such as cheerios)	70	15	15
Cheese <sup>2</sup>	7	37	56
Cookies (such as oatmeal)	65	4	31
Crackers (such as saltines or graham crackers)	66	8	26
Cut-up vegetable (such as carrots and celery)	94	4	2
Dried fruit (such as apricots)	93	6	11
Energy bar, breakfast bar, granola bar	91	4	5
Fresh fruit (such as apples, oranges, and grapes)	75	10	15
Fruit juice (such as apple, grape, and orange)	99	0	1
Pretzels	78	10	12
Sports beverages	100	0	0
Trail mix (including nuts,dried fruit, and M&Ms)	43	11	46
Yogurt with fruit <sup>2</sup>	75	17	8

**Table 2.** Good Snacks for Athletes to Take With Them When Traveling [7].

<sup>1</sup>: Energy substrate distribution varies with brand name and type.

<sup>2</sup>: May require refrigeration.

### Arriving at the destination

- Place, time and where to eat should be planned in advance. It is important to consume foods similar to those eaten at home. For each day, when, where and what to eat should be planned [3].
- If the time zone of the destination is different, mealtimes should be adjusted according to the new location, but this can be even more difficult when combined with travel fatigue. The only solution is to go to the destination early before the competition [7].
- It should be checked whether it is safe to drink water from the local water supply network. If there is a risk, water, soft drinks and hot drinks sold in closed bottles should be consumed and the ice put into the drinks (usually because tap water is used) should be considered [6].
- Athletes should avoid food that is sold outdoors and raw foods that are not well-cooked or unknown to them. Bottled, well-known brand water and fruit juice should be used [6,12,13].
- Restaurants with à la carte menus should be preferred to determine exactly what they want. Some dishes may not meet the athlete's wishes. For example, grilled fish next to a desired potato, sauce soaked in mash; broccoli covered with cheese; apple pie can

come with ice cream. However, the athlete may have asked for baked potatoes, grilled fish, broccoli and lemon juice alongside grilled fish [7].

- It should be ensured that food is cooked well and avoided any vegetables and unpeeled fruit that come into contact with the water supply network or soil if water safety is suspected [1,4].
- Salads, mayonnaise, eggs, chicken, fish, meats that can be consumed (sausage, salami, bacon etc.), cakes, pastry and ice cream are foods that should be consumed with caution [1,6].
- Attention should be paid to oils. Healthy soups should be preferred instead of creamy soups, salads with mayonnaise added sauce, pastries and unnecessary oil addition to food. Creamy soups contain fewer nutrients more fat than broth soup. Lemon juice should be used in salads instead of sauces containing mayonnaise [1,7].
- Instead of sauteed and fried foods, baked, grilled, boiled ones should be preferred [7].
- Low-fat dairy products and low-fat salad dressings should be preferred [7].
- Red meat, poultry and seafood should be well cooked and served hot [12].
- Breakfast cereals, milk powder, canned food, dried foods, sports drinks and nutrients enriched with nutrients can be taken together for a longer period of stay [6].

### Restaurants

Traveling athletes often eat in restaurants. Dining in the restaurant can affect the performance of athletes. For example, eating out can cause gastrointestinal distress. Since breakfast cannot be made in restaurants in the early hours, it may cause athletes to decrease their glycogen stores. However, regular nutrition can be achieved by planning nutrition and choosing the right food. For this, you should make a reservation in advance, look at the menu options and prefer restaurants with a buffet preference. Buffets often offer foods with high saturated fat. However, by making the right choice, a low-fat diet with complex carbohydrates can be achieved. In long-term competitions, athletes may find little time to eat. In such cases, liquid meal supplements such as Ensure and Boost, which allow for easily digestible carbohydrate intake, are recommended [2].

### Conclusion

The food needs of athletes can be met even on the road. There is no “Champion Breakfast” or “Magic Food” to win competitions, but poor food consumption or poor nutritional planning can adversely affect the athlete’s performance. Nutrition on the road can be a challenge for the athlete, but regular planning can provide optimal nutrition even away from home.

### Bibliography

1. Ersoy G. “Egzersiz ve Spor Yapanlar İçin Beslenmesi”. 4. Baskı. Ankara, Nobel Yayın Dağıtım (2011).
2. Wagner DR. “Eating on the Road: Practical Nutrition Strategies for the Traveling Athlete”. *Athletic Therapy Today* 14.5 (2009): 1-4.
3. Reilly T, *et al.* “Nutrition for Travel”. *Journal of Sports Sciences* 25.1 (2007): 125-134.
4. Benardot D. “Nutrition for serious athletes”. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Champaign IL, Human Kinetics (2000).

5. Grandjean AC and Ruud JS. "The travelling Athlete". In: Maughan RJ, editor. *Nutrition in Sports*. 1<sup>st</sup> edition. USA: Blackwell Publishing (2000): 484-490.
6. Güneş Z. "Spor ve Beslenme. Antrenör ve Sporcu El Kitabı". 4. Baskı. Ankara, Nobel Yayın Dağıtım (2005).
7. Benardot D. "Advanced Sports Nutrition". 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Champaign IL, Human Kinetics (2012).
8. Ryan M. "Sports Nutrition for Endurance Athletes". Colorado, Velo pres (2012).
9. Skolnik H. "Sport Nutrition in a Fast- food Society: Eating on the road". *Athletic Therapy Today* 4.6 (1999): 22-26.
10. Leggat P and Nowak M. "Dietary advice for airline travel". *Journal of Travel Medicine* 4.1 (1997): 14-16.
11. Ellis D. "Travel Nutrition". *ATT* 10.5 (2005): 60-61.
12. Milne CJ and Shaw MT. "Travelling to China for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games". *British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)* 42.5 (2008): 321-326.
13. Leatherwood WE and Drago JS. "Effect of airline travel on performance: a review of the literature". *British Journal of Sports Medicine (BJSM)* 47.9 (2013): 561-567.

**Volume 15 Issue 1 January 2020**

**©All rights reserved by Günay Eskici.**