

# The PIT Stop

A BELL CENTER  
PARTNER IN  
TRAINING  
NEWSLETTER

## Race Weekend is HERE!



February 2010

Hi Everyone!

It's here! We are only days away from the Mercedes weekend and I know it will be one you will never forget. Running or walking the race is a huge accomplishment in itself, but you all have also worked so hard to raise funds for the very special children at The Bell Center. You have given of yourself on many levels and the PIT program is lucky to have you. I hope you will wear your Bell Center shirt and the photo of your child with pride!

A great way to start of Mercedes weekend is to come and cheer on the

children of The Bell Center as they participate in their own race Saturday morning at 9am. I promise that you will be so inspired that you will want to line up for the marathon right then!

I have enjoyed this job immensely and all you have done has made my time and effort so worthwhile. I look forward to seeing you at the finish line!

A sincere thank you,  
Jen Dent  
MM Chair  
903.7353

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## Turn in Your Money for Prizes!

Monday, February 22 is the deadline to turn in your fundraising money to qualify for PIT fundraising prizes. **PLEASE NOTE: There is no deadline for turning in money-The Bell Center will be pleased to accept donations any time.**

# THE PRE-RACE MEAL

By Matt Fitzgerald for *Active.com*

Every meal is important, but no meal is more important than the one before a race. Choosing the wrong foods, eating too much or too little, or eating at the wrong time can affect your performance and possibly ruin your race, or at least make your performance less than optimal. Eating the right pre-race meal at the right time ensures that all your hard training doesn't go to waste.

The main purpose of the pre-race meal is to fill your liver with glycogen, especially if it precedes a morning race. Liver glycogen fuels your nervous system while you sleep, and as a result, your liver is roughly 50 percent glycogen-depleted when you wake up in the morning. Your muscles, inactive during the night, remain fully glycogen loaded from the previous day.



## Timing

Timing is perhaps the most important consideration. The ideal time for a pre-race meal is about four hours before the race, because it's early enough to digest and store a large amount of energy (i.e. a large number of calories), yet late enough that this energy won't be used up by race time.

Most running races start early in the morning, and since sleep is also important, it's often impossible to eat a full breakfast four hours before the horn sounds. That's okay. It's usually possible to eat at least two hours out. While you won't safely be able to eat as much this close to race time, you can still eat enough.

The appropriate size of your pre-race meal depends on three factors: the duration of your race, your size and the timing of the meal. The longer the race you're competing in and the heavier you are, the larger your pre-race meal should be. The closer your pre-race meal falls to the race start, the smaller it must be. If you're able to eat four hours out, you can safely consume up to 1,000 calories. If you eat just two hours before the start, eat a smaller meal of 300 to 400 calories.



## What to Eat

At least 80 percent of the calories you consume in your pre-race meal should come from carbohydrates. Keep your protein, and especially your fat and fiber consumption low. These nutrients take up space that are better utilized by carbohydrate. Also avoid gas-producing foods such as onions.

The types of carbohydrate are not important. While some studies have shown a performance benefit associated with eating a low-glycemic index (GI) meal rather than a high-GI meal before exercise, these meals were eaten just 30 minutes before exercise (the worst possible time for a high-GI meal, because blood glucose levels tend to decrease about 30 minutes after a high-GI meal). Recall that in a high-GI meal, carbohydrates enter the bloodstream very quickly, whereas in a low-GI meal, carbs enter the bloodstream at a lower rate.) In studies involving a more sensibly timed pre-exercise meal, the glycemic index of the meal has had no effect on performance.

Choose foods and drinks that are not only easily-digested, but also easily-consumed--especially if you're prone to nervousness. Few athletes have their usual hearty appetite on race mornings, but the butterflies in their stomach usually permit consumption of soft, bland foods such as oatmeal and bananas.

A liquid meal such as a breakfast shake is another good choice, as long as it's high in carbohydrate and low in protein, fat and fiber. If you don't have a ritual pre-race meal, try various options and pay careful attention to the results. As with your pre-race dinner, once you've settled upon a pre-race breakfast that works well, stick with it.

# THE PRE-RACE MEAL (Con't)

By Matt Fitzgerald for *Active.com*

Here are my choices for the five best foods to eat (or drink) before a race:



## Banana

Bananas are almost all carbohydrate. A large banana contains more than 30 grams of carbohydrate, just one gram of protein and no fat whatsoever. Bananas are also high in potassium (400 mg), which is lost in sweat during running. As mentioned above, their softness and light taste make them easy to consume even with pre-race nerves, and their natural "wrapper" makes them handy for eating on the road.



## Bagel

A bagel makes an excellent pre-race breakfast food, not only because it's rich in carbohydrate, bland and easily-digested, but also because it's something many runners eat for breakfast routinely, hence familiar.

Eat it dry or top it with something low in fat such as a light smearing of reduced fat cream cheese.



## Energy Bar

Energy bars such as PowerBar and ClifBar are made to be eaten before exercise. Most are very high in carbohydrates and low in fiber, fat and protein. The better bars also contain useful amounts of sodium, potassium and the antioxidant vitamins C and E. A cappuccino flavor PowerBar, for example, contains 45 g of carbohydrate, 110 mg each of sodium and potassium, 35 percent of the recommended daily allowance of magnesium and 100 percent of the RDA of vitamins C and E.

There's a huge variety of energy bars on the market--some are better than others. Choose one that's close to the PowerBar formula I just outlined. Avoid the high-protein, low-carb bars that have become popular in recent years. The advantage of the wide selection of bars on the market is that it's easy to find one you like and can eat without unpleasantness before a race. Pay attention to texture too. Some bars are very chewy, and for some runners (myself included) eating chewy foods tends to exacerbate the stomach churning that's associated with pre-race nervousness.



## Meal Replacement Shake

I drink one or two meal replacement shakes before almost every race. Brands such as Boost and Ensure have a nearly perfect nutrition profile, they take care of energy and hydration needs, they're super-convenient, and nothing is easier to consume before a race--even if you're extremely anxious. And they taste good.

Ensure, for example, delivers a whopping 250 calories of energy in a little eight-ounce can, including 40 grams of carbohydrate. The one downside to these beverages is their efficiency.

By providing so much nutrition in such little volume, they are not as filling as solid foods and can actually leave you feeling hungry in the middle of a marathon if you rely on them solely.

In the same general category as meal replacement shakes are performance recovery drinks including Endurox R4 and Ultragen. They are normally used immediately after exercise, but they can also be used for the purpose of pre-race fueling. They are sold as powders that you mix with water. Because these drinks are slightly more diluted than meal replacement drinks, they do an even better job of hydrating and fueling simultaneously.

# THE PRE-RACE MEAL (Con't)

By Matt Fitzgerald for Active.com



## Oatmeal

Like bananas, oatmeal is almost pure carbohydrate, plus soft and light in taste. It is also the most filling food among the five best pre-race foods, which is good for those wanting something substantial in their belly before they head out to burn a few thousand calories. Some runners also prefer to eat a real breakfast food for breakfast, and oatmeal certainly provides that.

Oatmeal requires preparation that can be more challenging on the road than at home. If your hotel room has a microwave oven, you're all set as long as you've brought some kind of bowl with you. If there's no microwave oven, you can use the coffee maker to heat water.

There are so many factors we must think about before a big race. Following these guidelines can help you deal with one of the most important elements.

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## *Time to Celebrate!*

The Partners in Training Awards Party will take place on Thursday, February 25 at The Matt Jones Gallery at 7pm. Come enjoy food and drinks from Macaroni Grill and toast your accomplishments. Prizes will be awarded to the top PIT and top relay PIT fundraisers. Evite to follow soon!



# *Race Weekend Reminders!*

## **WEAR YOUR BC CHILD'S PHOTO ON RACE DAY!**

By now you should have received your packet of information with your child's photo in it that you will wear on your shirt the day of the race. If you have NOT received this, you need to contact Maureen Farr at The Bell Center as soon as possible. You CANNOT pick up your photo at Expo. Maureen's information is: 205.879.3417 or [mfarr@thebellcenter.org](mailto:mfarr@thebellcenter.org)

## **BELL CENTER MILE MARKER**

Please remind your friends and family to come cheer at The Bell Center mile marker, located at **corner of 20<sup>th</sup> Street South and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South**. We'll be there 7 a.m. 'til the last runner comes through!

## **CARBS FOR A CAUSE**

There will be a Carb pasta dinner on Saturday night, February 13<sup>th</sup> at The McWane Center. Each PIT receives one free ticket, which can be picked up at The Bell Center. Tickets must be picked up by this Thursday, February 11 at 3pm and there is limited availability. Additional tickets can also be purchased at The Bell Center and are \$15 per adult and \$5 for age 10 and under.

## **EXPO**

There will be a Bell Center booth at Expo. Please stop by!

## **PRE-RACE HOSPITALITY**

The morning of the half and full marathons, don't forget that there will be a PIT hospitality area upstairs at Boutwell. Come early and get fueled for the race. Enjoy food, coffee, and our own bathrooms! The hospitality area will open at 5am. We will also gather in this area at 6:40am to take a group photo-I hope you will join us!