



# Fuelling Fitness for Your Sport Gymnastics

## About Gymnastics

- Gymnastics is a dynamic sport that incorporates seven disciplines; men's and women's artistic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, trampolining, sports aerobics, sports acrobatics and cheerleading.
- Competitions usually have an hour warm-up and competition time can last over 3 hours. During this time, some disciplines will practice their skills/routines repetitively, constantly moving, others will rest between routines.
- Training times vary but most competitive gymnasts train a minimum of 3 times per week for at least 3 hours at a time. These sessions incorporate skill development, strength and flexibility training and maybe ballet. Elite gymnasts will train for over 30 hours per week including morning and evening sessions.
- National Championships for Rhythmic Gymnastics and Men's and Women's Artistic Gymnastics are usually held in May, Trampolining in July, Sports Acrobats and Cheerleading are in September and Sports Aerobics in October.

## Training Diet

- Gymnasts require a well-balanced nutritious training diet. Gymnasts are usually quite young with many preferring small frequent meals to meet nutritional requirements and to fit into their busy schedules of school, training and homework.
- Most gymnasts need ideas for nutrient rich snacks to get them through long evening sessions of training. Foods that can be eaten between school and training in the car are a good idea. Ideas include low fat 2-minute noodles, fruit scrolls, fruit and yoghurt or honey/jam sandwiches.
- Due to a heavy training schedule it is most important for a gymnast to have the right training diet, otherwise they may get "run down" in the lead up to important competitions.

## Fluid Needs

- We recommend a sports drink during training and competition because this will quickly replace sweat losses and the carbohydrate provides energy for active muscles.
- Despite training indoors, gymnasts need to keep their fluids up during training. This is to prevent dehydration that can lead to poor performances. Ideally young gymnasts should aim for 300-600ml/hr (more in hot weather).



## What Should I Eat Pre-Event?

Gymnasts usually prefer a light meal that is easily digestible. A meal low in fat and high in carbohydrates for energy is ideal, consumed 2 hours before warm-up. Some ideas include:

- Sustagen Sport tetra pak
- A piece of fruit and a 200g tub of low fat fruit yoghurt
- Bowl of breakfast cereal and low fat milk

## What Should I Eat/Drink During Competition?

- Competitions often last over 1-2 main meals (eg 8am - 2pm) and extra carbohydrate intake is essential for replenishing stores. Yoghurt, fruit bars, and jelly lollies are ideal snacks for between routines. A sports drink is also ideal as it replaces carbohydrate and fluid at the same time.

## What About Recovery?

- State, National and International competitions last over a few days so make sure that a recovery meal is eaten straight after cooling down. This should be taken into consideration when planning the daily meals. Eg: fruit and yoghurt, sandwiches, sports drink and raisin bread are all suitable recovery snacks that are easy to carry around

## Other Nutrition Tips

- Gymnasts (and parents) need to be organised and pack snacks for before and during training. Water bottles are also a good item to have in the gym bag to make sure plenty of water is drunk during training and on the way home or to school.
- Low iron stores can be a problem with female gymnasts, particularly elite gymnasts who train long hours. If you get tired ask your doctor for a blood test to check your iron levels. See Fact sheet #16
- Eating Disorders are an issue with gymnasts. Care should be taken to encourage gymnasts to eat healthy but not be restrictive in their eating. A wide range of foods should be eaten so that all nutrients are obtained regularly. Advice from a Sports Dietitian may be helpful. See Factsheet #12 and 14.

## How to get involved

Your local State Gymnastic Association can help you get involved.

Click on the link to find out more [www.gymnastics.org.au](http://www.gymnastics.org.au)

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