Athlete Scenario

Eating on the road is challenging; many of us lose weight. As a drum corps athlete, a typical training day consists of three, 4-hour training blocks with meals in between. It doesn’t get easier on tour as we practice 2-3 days at a site with similar training blocks plus late-night competition. After we pack up the buses and travel through the night, we are lucky to rest on a gym floor before training again.

Goals

• Consume enough calories to maintain energy demands and weight during long travel and competition.

• Eat consistent and nutrient-dense meals that are easily tolerated to reduce the risk of nausea and illness and support recovery during travel.

• Maintain immune health by practicing proper food safety and getting enough sleep for adequate recovery.

• Stay adequately hydrated in preparation for the next day’s practice and performance.

Challenges for Travel

• Keeping up with energy needs: Irregular and/or inconsistent meal times, limited freshly prepared meals and snacks, constant moving of heavy travel gear, long rehearsal days, motion sickness on the tour bus, and/or anxiety can make eating enough difficult.

• Getting adequate rest and recovery: Being in close quarters, anxiety about competition, and late night socializing with fellow members on the bus can make it a challenge to get enough sleep which can lead to a higher risk of illness or injury.

• Food and water safety while on the road: Neglected hygiene, poor handwashing/sanitizing, consuming foods kept at unsafe temperatures, and sharing food and beverage containers increase the risk of illness.
Practical Nutrition Strategies

Consistent nutrition is key to getting enough energy.

• Eat on a schedule and pack foods that keep well during long travel. The average weight loss per season is about 7 lbs for a 5’9” performer. Some experts estimate that a performer may march over 9 miles a day and burn over 5000 calories!

• Set a schedule to eat meals every 4 hours with snacks in between meals. Refer to Nutrition Basics for Drumline and Nutrition for Marching Arts fact sheets for nutrient timing recommendations before competition.

Choose foods that have a mix of carbohydrates, proteins and fats.

• Carbohydrates: Pre-cooked brown rice, quinoa, canned or shelf-stable packs of lentil soup; mini boxes of granola and muesli; dried fruit, fruit pouches, fruit bars and leathers; granola bars, crackers, whole-wheat bread, and tortillas.

• Proteins and fats: Tuna, salmon, and chicken packets; nut butters; trail mix; animal or plant-based jerky; powdered and shelf-stable protein drinks. If you have access to a refrigerator, keep and store prepared tofu and tempeh, edamame, hummus and other dips.

Nutrient Timing Around Performances

• Pre-Performance Meals: Don’t experiment with new foods on performance days. Avoid spicy, greasy, and high-fiber foods. Eat meals within 3-4 hours of performance and snacks within 1-2 hours. Eat to just full, not stuffed. If anxious or nauseous, eat and drink small amounts of foods and fluids throughout the day such as:
  – Mini sandwiches or wraps: ½ sandwiches of nut butters, chicken, tuna, tofu or bean wraps prepared with tortilla
  – Liquid calories: Breakfast meal replacements and sports shakes

• Pre/During Performance Snacks: Consume easy-to-digest carbohydrates such as fruit slices, ice pops, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages, gels, crackers, pretzels, or dry cereal.

• Post-Performance Meals: Eat within 1 hour to optimize recovery and prepare for the next day’s training. Be prepared with portable snacks such as fruit and shelf-stable protein shakes, protein bars, or cereal with shelf-stable milk.

Tips to Take With You

• Prepare easily tolerated foods ahead of your travel.

• Carry a water bottle and sip frequently throughout the day for optimal hydration. Refer to Hydration Basics for Marching Arts fact sheet.

• To minimize the risk for traveling nausea, separate solids from liquids and consume fluids about 20-30 minutes after eating.

• Pack travel-friendly foods balanced in carbohydrates, proteins, fats, and fluids.

• Have a nutrition plan to help meet your needs for performance and recovery. For more personalized nutrition guidance, consult a sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN).

Contact SCAN:
www.scandpg.org
800-249-2875

Reviewed by SCAN’s Athletes and the Arts Nutrition Team. The key to optimal meal planning is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing “Find a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist” at findanrd.eatright.org.

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