

**SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD HIGH SCHOOL
RAIDERS CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK & FIELD
NUTRITION AND HYDRATION SUGGESTIONS**

- You must eat on meet days, whether they are weekday or weekend meets. You will not perform to the best of your abilities if you have not been eating and drinking properly.
- Staying hydrated is an ongoing commitment. You cannot have a cup of water before your race and expect that to keep you from dehydrating. You must commit yourself to staying hydrated as an everyday practice, whether or not we have a meet that day or within the next few days. Gulping down water or Gatorade can cause cramps. Drinking throughout the day will not. If you have kept yourself hydrated, you will not have to worry about gulping drinks down before your race. It is better to sip your drink, rather than “pounding” it. Your body cannot properly absorb the drink if you “pound” it, and it just winds up going right through you. If you gradually consume your drink, your body will be able to better absorb it. Your urine should be clear and free of strong urine odors. The darker your urine, and the stronger its odor, the less hydrated you are.
- Do not drink caffeinated beverages. Caffeine is a diuretic. It dehydrates you by pulling water from your body tissue and causing you to urinate excessively. No soda, iced tea, coffee, etc.
- Stay away from dairy products and fried foods. Your body does not digest these foods easily, and they have a tendency to cause cramps, side stitches, and upset stomachs/nausea/diarrhea. If we are having an afternoon meet, it is all right to have cereal with milk for breakfast. Any food with seeds or nuts in it may also cause you stomach problems- seeds and nuts do not digest easily.
- Spicy foods cause indigestion and heartburn. Stay away from them. No tacos, sausage, barbecue, chili, etc.
- Eat meals that are high in carbohydrate and protein content. No junk food!
- There are different types of sugar. Eating fruit or a granola bar is much better than eating a candy bar. You want to eat foods with a low-glycemic index that will release energy slowly and steadily. High-glycemic foods, such as candy bars, release energy rapidly and give what is commonly known as a “sugar rush.”
- It is the best idea to “brown bag” it on meet days.
- If you are looking for a snack with your meal during the school day, have a piece of fruit (apples are good suggestions; stay away from highly acidic fruits such as citrus fruits) or hard pretzels. The best snack you can buy in the cafeteria is a hot pretzel from the school store, but be sure to brush off the excess salt.
- Bananas are high in potassium, which helps maintain fluid and electrolyte levels in your body. Bananas, however, are a very heavy food and do not digest easily. As a result, you should eat a banana the night before a morning race or the morning of an afternoon race.
- Be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Water and juice are good. Sports drinks are better. Do not walk by a water fountain in school without taking a drink. It is important that you start hydrating yourself two to three days before the meet to make sure your body is fully hydrated.

- It is better to drink watered-down Gatorade than pure Gatorade before you race. Water your Gatorade down to 50% water and 50% Gatorade. Drink pure Gatorade after your race to rehydrate and replenish your electrolyte levels.
- Bring a light, portable snack with you in case of sudden hunger. PowerBars (or an equivalent sports bar) and granola bars work well. Energy gel packets (PowerGel, GU, etc.) work well before a race or hard workout. A plain bagel is also good if you have a longer period of time before you have to run.
- Discuss and share your eating habits with your teammates. You may find out something new that might work for you.

Do not experiment with anything new on a meet day.

If you want to try something new, do it the day of an easy practice, and if that works, try it again on the day of a hard practice. If it doesn't work out as planned, you have not ruined a race because of an experiment gone awry.

Here is an example of my eating habits when I raced. I followed these guidelines for many years and found they worked very well for me.

It is of paramount importance that you get up and eat before a morning race or practice. If you go to bed when you are supposed to, getting up to have breakfast will not be a Herculean task.

Dinner the night before:

- pasta (stay away from anything with too much cheese; also, no Alfredo sauce)
- salad
- fruit
- Italian bread (try to stay away from garlic bread- if you have too much, you may get indigestion and be unable to sleep well because of it)
- light dessert (nothing so sugary that it will keep you up at night)
- water and/or Gatorade
- if you want to have meat with your pasta, your best bet is to have chicken- you can mix it in with your pasta or have it separate

Note: Take something to drink to bed with you. If you wake up in the night, take a drink every time you do before going back to sleep. A sign of good hydration is having to get up in the middle of the night to urinate.

Breakfast:

- 1-2 bagels, plain, or toasted with a small amount of margarine or fruit preserves. Try your best to take them plain. No cream cheese! The best kinds of bagels to eat are plain or wheat. Raisin bagels are very bad to eat before you run, as are sesame seed bagels.
- Gatorade & water
- PowerBar or similar
- dry cereal (Cheerios or similar- no sugary cereals)

Note: Do not have any of the traditional breakfast fares such as waffles, pancakes, bacon, sausage, etc. Do not slather anything with butter, margarine, cream cheese, or fruit preserves. Use enough to help you “get your food down,” but only if absolutely necessary. Dairy-based products can lead to upset stomachs and gastrointestinal distress. Stay away from fruit juice due to its high acidic content. Any beverage with caffeine should not be consumed- caffeine is a diuretic. No milk or dairy products.

Lunch (afternoon meet):

- sandwich- turkey breast, chicken breast, or other lunch meat with lettuce on roll (stay away from spiced meats and other deli products that may cause stomach discomfort or indigestion; cheese does not digest very easily and could upset your stomach during your race, so leave it off; many condiments such as mustard, relish, sesame seeds, or mayonnaise are not a good idea, either)
- Gatorade/Powerade & water
- snack- one or more of the following: apple, pretzels, PowerBar, granola bar, crackers, dry cereal

Snacks to pack for the meet:

- bagels, fruit, dry cereal (no sugary cereals), PowerBars, energy gels (PowerGel, GU, Clif Shot, etc.), gummy bears, crackers, granola

If you feel you are too nervous to eat, try the following:

If you are trying to eat at home, but are too nervous, try eating in front of the television or while using the Internet. The reason you are too nervous is more than likely because you are thinking too much about your race. Doing something else while you are eating will keep your mind off the race and allow you a relaxing meal. You **must** eat. A fear of throwing up your food is not a suitable excuse not to eat. There is no excuse not to eat. You will not get cramps from hydrating yourself properly. You will practice or race very poorly if you have not eaten properly, as there will be nothing “in your tank.”

After the meet:

Easily digestible food and drink is a must. You need to re-hydrate yourself immediately. Snacking after you finish your cooldown is an excellent idea. A well-balanced dinner when you return home is also a necessity. A dinner rich with protein and carbohydrate is an excellent idea, so if you're a steak-and-potatoes kind of person, enjoy yourself.

PowerBars, energy gel packets, and sports drinks

These are available at many grocery stores now, as well as health food and vitamin stores. You can purchase them online at <http://www.roadrunnersports.com>. Gatorade bars can be purchased at <http://www.gatorade.com>. These products are more expensive than candy bars, but you cannot put a price on maintaining good nutrition and good health. Sports drinks are more expensive than water, but they are integral to keeping yourself properly hydrated.

Remember that the better you eat, the better you will run.