



# The Science of Soccer

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## EATING ON THE RUN

### Suggestions for Fast Food On The Road



Eating a proper diet is one of the most important components of match preparation and recovery. Choosing the right meals can help improve your performance on the field. Eating the wrong foods can lead to disaster. Diet is especially important at tournament time when you are away from home and eating on the road. Playing two games per day with a short period to re-fuel between matches makes eating properly difficult. Despite this, you cannot forget to eat well between matches. The question is, how can you eat properly when away from home?

When you're on the road, it's always best to **bring your own food** to eat between games. You can be sure that you have proper nutritional choices that include plenty of carbohydrates (CHO) and are low in fat<sup>1</sup>. You can also bring foods that you enjoy and spend your recovery time relaxing rather than standing in line, waiting for your food to be served.

Packing your lunch for a tournament can be difficult and sometimes impractical. When you're not able to bring your own lunch and need to eat quickly between matches, your options generally involve fast food. In this case, proper nutritional choices are limited. Most fast food restaurants serve food that is high in fat and sodium and low in CHO. The exact opposite of what you need. But, if you are savvy and remember a few

simple guidelines, you can find foods to meet your nutritional requirements.

### Picking the Right Foods

The most important thing to remember is to look for foods that are high in CHO and low in fat. Pick foods that have less than 20% of their calories as fat, about 50-100 grams of CHO and about 10-15 grams of protein. Your best bets are lean meat sandwiches. Bread provides the CHO and meat provides the protein. If you're in doubt about how much fat and CHO are in fast foods, the nutritional information for all menu items should be posted somewhere in the restaurant. To calculate the % fat, use the formula below (assume that fat has 9 kcal per gram). Also, follow a few simple guidelines to insure that you're ready to play the next match.

$$\%FAT = \frac{(\text{fat grams} \times 9)}{(\text{total calories})} \times 100\%$$



<sup>1</sup> For information about nutritional strategies for tournaments, see the Science of Soccer article, "Tournament Nutrition" (Dec 2007).

## Fast Food Guidelines

**Limit mayonnaise on sandwiches:** A teaspoon of mayonnaise has around 35 kcal, nearly all of which is fat.

**Avoid anything fried:** Especially french fries, chicken nuggets and chips. French fries are about 50% fat and are generally high in salt.

**Avoid adding extra salt:** Even though they do not taste “salty”, most fast foods have plenty of sodium.

**Be careful with hamburgers:** Most hamburgers do not use lean ground meat so the fat content is usually high. Look for baked chicken and turkey instead.

**Salads are not recommended:** They don't offer a lot of calories, have little CHO and sometimes the dressings are high in fat.

**Lay off the soda:** Sodas are high in simple sugars, not the type of CHO needed. Instead, bring a sport drink such as Gatorade or fruit juice.

## Fast Food Choices

What are the best choices for fast food eating? For the most part, look for lean meat sandwiches, burritos, fruit and vegetables. If you must go the fast food route, here are a few selections that meet the nutritional needs of young athletes:

**Subway:** Subway offers several great options for tournament fast food. Most of their sandwiches are low in fat and high in CHOs. Especially those made with turkey or chicken. An example is the Subway club and the Oven Roasted Chicken Breast.

The turkey breast and turkey breast with ham subs have similar nutritional compositions. Adding cheese increases the fat content but, with cheese, these sandwiches are still below 20% fat. Bread choices basically the same, except for the cheese topped breads which have higher fat content. Avoid sandwiches that are made with “fatty” meats such as the Italian BMT, Spicy Italian or the Meatball Marinara. And, limit the mayonnaise, creamy dressings (ranch, chipotle southwest sauce, etc) and oils.

**Quiznos:** Quiznos has lots of great sandwich choices, but only if ordered correctly. One of Quizno's trademarks is the sauces and dressings that are added to make their sandwiches unique (ranch, peppercorn, zesty grille sauces). Most of these increase the fat content so be sure to remove these from you order. A few good selections are the Black Angus, Tuscan turkey and

Honey Cured Ham sandwiches. As with Subway, a slice or two of cheese does not dramatically increase the fat content of these sandwiches.

**Taco Bell:** Surprisingly, Taco Bell offers a number of excellent choices. Some of their selections are high in fat but some are very low fat, high CHO and protein. The best choices are the bean, chicken and steak burritos. Avoid sides such as nachos and chili cheese fries.

**Wendy's:** The best choice on the Wendy's menu is their baked potato. A plain potato has virtually no fat and lots of CHO. If you add a bit of butter or sour cream, you can still keep the fat content below 15%. There are a few other choices including the Chili and Ultimate Chicken Grill. Unfortunately, most of their sandwiches come with lots of mayonnaise or other fatty spreads.

**KFC:** Believe it or not, a fried chicken place has several reasonable lunch options. The Honey BBQ and Tender Roast sandwiches have baked chicken. You should avoid any of their fried products. The only exception is the Original Recipe chicken breast, with the skin removed. However, there is lots of protein but little CHO.

**Chick-Fil-A:** The specialty at Chick-Fil-A is chicken. Unfortunately, most of their sandwiches contain fried chicken and those that have baked chicken usually add bacon. Your best bet here is the Chargrilled Chicken Sandwich.

**McDonalds:** There is not a lot to choose from at McDonalds. Most sandwiches are high in fat and other items are fried. Even their plain hamburgers, which do not have mayonnaise, are in excess of 30% fat. Add cheese or the Big Mac special sauce and the fat content approaches 50%. About the only thing available is the Premium Grilled Chicken Sandwich.

**Burger King:** As with McDonalds, BK doesn't offer much for the athlete. Nearly everything on the menu has fat contents above 30%. The Whopper with cheese tops the list at a whopping 56% fat. About the only healthy choice available is the Tendergrill Chicken Sandwich ordered *without* mayonnaise.

**Pizza Hut:** For lunch between matches, Pizza Hut should be avoided. Most pizza selections have between 30-40% fat, including the Veggie Lover's Pizza. Even their new Fit n' Delicious pizzas still have around 25% fat. If you must have pizza, your best choice is ham and pineapple with 220 kcal per slice and only 31% fat.

**Other Restaurants:** There are several other restaurants that are not considered “fast food” but do offer relatively fast service. These include **Panera Bread**

and the *Atlanta Bread Company*. There are also a number of *local deli's* and *sandwich / sub shops* that have excellent meal choices. For the most part, your best bet is to stick with lean meat sandwiches (turkey and chicken) and go light on the mayonnaise and other sauces.

## Detailed Nutritional Information

The table below provides detailed nutritional information on various fast food products. The information presented was obtained for each restaurant's website. Remember, the goal is to select foods that are low in fat (<20%) and high in CHO (50-100g) while providing some protein (10-15g).

## Conclusions

The key to eating on the road is to look for meals that are high in CHO and low in fat. It cannot be stressed enough that *when you are away from home, your best option is to pack your lunch*. That way you can ensure meals that meet proper nutritional goals. When packing lunch is not possible or impractical practical your between-match meal options are often limited to fast food. While most argue that fast food is never a good option, there are a few restaurants that offer healthy choices. By using a few simple suggestions and educating yourself, you can find nutritionally sound meals are some familiar restaurants.

# FAST FOOD NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

RESTAURANT	kcal	% Fat	CHO (g)	Prot (g)
<b>Subway</b>				
Subway Club (12")	514	16	94	48
Over Roasted Chicken Breast (12")	477	16	95	47
<b>Quiznos</b>				
Black Angus (regular w/o cheese, sauce)	650	20	78	55
Tuscan Turkey (regular w/o cheese, sauce)	490	14	77	33
Honey Cured Ham (regular w/o cheese, sauce)	450	17	65	32
<b>Taco Bell</b>				
Bean Burrito	370	12	55	13
Chicken or Steak Burrito Supreme	415	20	52	18
Bean, Chicken or Steak Burrito Fresco	349	8	54	28
<b>Wendy's</b>				
Baked Potato (no butter or sour cream)	270	0	61	7
Chili (large)	330	25	35	25
Ultimate Chicken Grill	320	20	36	28
<b>KFC</b>				
KFC Snacker Honey BBQ	210	14	32	14
Honey BBQ Sandwich	280	11	40	22
Tender Roast Sandwich (w/o sauce)	217	13	28	37
Original Recipe Chicken Breast (skin removed)	140	14	1	29
<b>Chick-Fil-A</b>				
Chargrilled Chicken Sandwich	270	11	33	28
<b>McDonalds</b>				
Premium Grilled Chicken Sandwich	420	21	51	32
<b>Burger King</b>				
Tendergrill Chicken Sandwich	400	16	49	36

### References:

[www.subway.com](http://www.subway.com)  
[www.quiznos.com](http://www.quiznos.com)

[www.tacobell.com](http://www.tacobell.com)  
[www.wendys.com](http://www.wendys.com)

[www.kfc.com](http://www.kfc.com)  
[www.chick-fil-a.com](http://www.chick-fil-a.com)

[www.mcdonalds.com](http://www.mcdonalds.com)  
[www.burgerking.com](http://www.burgerking.com)

