



nutrition fact sheet

Sports Nutrition

The appropriate nutrition is important for young athletes to train harder, perform at their best and recover faster. Understanding how nutrition impacts performance can provide a competitive edge. In this fact sheet, we explore the roles of carbohydrates and protein, meal timing, hydration, and whether supplements are necessary in optimising sports nutrition.

KEY MESSAGES

- Carbohydrates are the body's **primary** energy source.
- Protein helps to **build** and **repair** muscles.
- Low GI carbohydrates are slowly absorbed and provide **longer lasting energy** throughout the day.
- **Time** your meals and aim to eat low GI carbohydrates with some protein **3-4 hours pre-workout** and within **1 hour post-workout**.
- Drink water to stay hydrated **before, during** and **after** exercise.
- Don't try anything new on game day.

Importance of Nutrition in Sports

A well planned nutritious diet can boost sports performance by fuelling the body to perform for optimal performance, supporting overall health, helping to achieve training goals, promoting muscle growth and helping in recovery and, rehydration.

Role of Carbohydrates

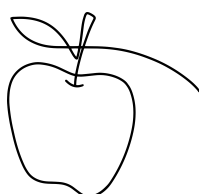
They are the body's primary source of energy used to fuel the brain and muscles when playing sports. Carbohydrates can be found in:

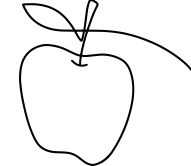
- **Grains** - bread, cereals, rice and pasta.
- **Some vegetables** - potato, sweet potato, corn, legumes and lentils.
- **Fruit**
- **Most dairy** - milk, yoghurt, ice cream and custard.

Not eating enough carbohydrates in preparation for a game or exercise may result in feelings of lethargy, poor concentration and coordination.

Benefits of Protein

Protein is important for muscle building and repair, aiding faster recovery after exercise. It is also slowly digested, providing a longer lasting release of energy. Consuming a combination of protein and carbohydrates before a game can support sustained energy. Good sources include lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, legumes, nuts and dairy.





Timing Your Meals

Choosing **when** to eat carbohydrates of different GI may enhance performance and recovery.

Pre-Exercise

- Eat a carbohydrate containing meal or snack with **some** protein about 3-4 hours before an event.
- Avoid meals high in fat, protein or fibre as these take longer to digest and may cause stomach upset.
- If eating 1-2 hours before a game, have smaller easily digestible snacks such as banana, quick oats, crackers or white bread.
- Some pre-exercise meals can include whole grain toast with banana and peanut butter, cereal with low fat milk and fruit, small bowl of pasta, smoothies or yoghurt with fruit.

Post-Exercise

- Choose carbohydrates and lean protein, within 1 hour after the session.
- This allows the body to replenish energy and aid in muscle recovery.
- Your next main meal can also help refuel if eaten within 2 hours.
- Some post-exercise snacks can include whole grain sandwiches, low fat flavoured milk or low fat yoghurt with fruits.

Hydration

The amount of fluid needed varies based on exercise intensity, duration and environmental conditions. Water is the best source of hydration. Drink water before, during and after exercising and increase hydration in hot weather. Dehydration can lead to fatigue, slower muscle recovery and decreased performance.

A Note About Supplements

Protein Supplements - Protein supplements should only be used if you are not able to get adequate protein from diet. This is because they are processed form of protein. It is also important to note that protein supplementation is generally not recommended until 18 years of age, unless discussed with your health care professional.

Creatine - Some athletes take creatine to improve strength, muscle mass and exercise performance, especially in short burst of high intensity activity. Research of use in creatine in adolescents is limited and therefore is not recommended and should only be used as per doctor recommendations.

Electrolytes - Electrolytes are often taken to help replenish minerals lost through exercise (sweat). Water is typically adequate for hydration post exercise, with electrolytes generally only being required if moderate-high intensity exercises that lasts for more than one hour is performed.

For more information, please scan the QR Codes

Kids Health | A Guide To Eating For Sports



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