

# Sports Nutrition

## How to eat your way to a better performance!

Nutrition is an important part of any sportsperson's preparation, amateur or professional. Adequate or good nutrition will not make up for a lack of talent, commitment, or a reluctance to get up for training on a rainy day! However it can play an important part in maintaining good health, preventing fatigue and dehydration.

Failure to recognise these points may prevent a sportsperson from achieving his/her full potential.

Good nutrition to maintain health is based around the balance of good health, as pictured in the national plate guide.

The basic rules for healthy eating are to eat mostly bread, cereals, potatoes, fruit & veg and eat less meat, fish and alternatives, dairy products, fats and sugars. Preventing fatigue is also based on this principle.

Breads, cereals, potatoes and rice contain carbohydrates which is an important source of fuel. The muscles in the body can store a limited amount of this (glycogen) however once this store becomes low then fatigue will be the result.

The way to refuel these stores and maintain exercise is to eat a diet based on carbohydrate foods e.g. breads, cereals and potatoes.

There is also some carbohydrate in fruits, lentils, dairy products and sugars (sweets and chocolates). These sources are important but should be in the same proportion as for health - see picture guide.

Dehydration can cause fatigue as the body loses fuel during activity. The environment, clothing and intensity of exercise can all play a part. It is important to try and drink little and often through training and after. A sports drink e.g. Lucozade Sport, Hydroactive, Isoster etc can be useful.

**For further information on good nutrition for sport or a formal nutritional assessment, contact:**

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Full nutritional support and health and fitness packages are available together with expert physiotherapy and sports injury care.

# Frequently asked questions

## **Q. What should I eat and drink before a game?**

*A. Before any game or event it is important to maximise your body's carbohydrate stores. Start the day with a good high carbohydrate breakfast e.g. toast, cereal, orange juice.*

*2-3 hours before the game or event have a light high carbohydrate meal e.g. jacket potato & tuna, pasta and tomato based sauce, beans on toast. Make sure your meal is low in fat as a high fat meal can slow down the absorption of carbohydrate.*

*Some athletes feel the benefit of a high carbohydrate snack 1-2 hours before the game/event e.g. bananas, cereal bars (make sure you train with this before you try it out!)*

*Have a drink (non-alcoholic!) prior to the game. 300-400ml or 1/2-pint to make sure you are fully hydrated.*

## **Q. What should I eat or drink during the game/event?**

*A. Try to prevent rather than cure. You should try to drink enough to offset any weight loss during the event. As a rule of thumb for every 1kg you lose during an event replace with 1.5 litres of liquid. A sports drink contains carbohydrate and sodium (salt), which can help with fluid absorption. Alternatively make your own.*

## **Q. What should I eat or drink after an event?**

*A. Eating after the event is a window of opportunity to refuel your muscles carbohydrate store. Pick high carbohydrate food like, jelly babies, bananas, wine gums or a sports drink. These will be absorbed quickly. Continue to eat plenty bread, cereal and potato goods over the next 24 hours.*

## **Q. Is there anything I should avoid during exercise?**

*A. Pick meals low in fat but avoid being too restrictive. Fat is a good source of energy. Avoid alcohol however as alcohol can make dehydration worse, interfere with carbohydrate refuelling and make any muscle damage far worse!*

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