

Nutrition

The lifestyle of an athlete or active person whether elite or recreational can pose many nutritional challenges. Many participants worry about what to eat immediately before an event, however it is the day to day training diet which has the greatest potential to influence performance. Eating the right food everyday will help you to get the most out of your training and perform at your best.

FUEL UP FOR TRAINING

Eat Plenty of Carbohydrates

- Carbohydrate is the body's main energy source during everyday activity and exercise.
- Carbohydrate is stored in the muscle and liver as glycogen.
- Glycogen stores need to be constantly replenished by eating carbohydrate rich foods.
- Examples of carbohydrate rich foods are:
 - 1) Nutrient dense, higher fibre foods e.g. wholegrain breads, crumpets, english muffins, breakfast cereals, pasta, rice, potatoes, dry biscuits, fruit, milk, yoghurt and legumes (e.g. Baked beans, Lentils).
 - 2) Non-nutritious foods e.g. Confectionary, jam, honey, cordial and soft drinks.
- Sports drinks can also contribute carbohydrate and assist with fluid replacement.
- Every meal and snack should be based on carbohydrate-rich foods.
- A Sports Dietitian can work out specific carbohydrate needs based on an individual's level of activity.

Eat Enough Protein

- Protein is made from amino acids and is used by the body for the building and repairing of muscles, and for many chemical reactions within the body. Aim to include protein in at least 4 meals and snacks across your day with 15-30g each meal or snack.
- Some individuals may require extra protein. A Sports Dietitian can work out specific requirements.
- Protein needs generally can be met with a healthy balanced diet that includes lean meats, fish and poultry, dairy products, eggs, nuts and legumes.
- Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs and low fat dairy products provide all of the essential amino acids.
- Vegetarians need to include a wide variety of plant protein sources such as nuts, legumes and soy products to ensure they consume enough protein.

Eat Nutritious Fats

- Fat provides additional energy and is a source of fat-soluble vitamins.
- High intakes of fat can contribute to excess body fat which may impair performance.
- Fats are digested slowly. Eating fats too close to competition may cause tummy upsets. It is better to include nutritious fats such as olive oil, avocado, margarines and full fat dairy products when you have at least 2 hours between a meal / snack and the start of a game / event.
- Often foods high in fat are eaten at the expense of carbohydrate based foods which therefore may not adequately replenish glycogen stores.
- Omega 3 fats are important to reduce inflammation, including them regularly and in particular in post-match or post training meals, can promote healing and repair of tissues.
- **Include healthy fats :**
 - o Choosing lean meats and include fish twice weekly
 - o Using olive oil in cooking and food preparation
 - o Avoiding fried foods and takeaways and high fat snack foods such as chips and chocolate bars
 - o Including plenty of fruits and vegetables



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FUEL UP FOR COMPETITION

- The pre-event meal provides a final opportunity to top up carbohydrate stores and prepare for exercise.
- To ensure food is digested prior to competition, eat a meal 2-4 hours before or a lighter snack 1-2 hours before competing.
- Choose carbohydrate rich foods that are low in fat and fibre to avoid abdominal discomfort. e.g. Plain pasta + tomato sauce, White toast + jam/ honey/ marmalade, low fat creamed rice, plain breakfast cereal + skim milk
- Choose foods you are familiar with and plan ahead.

FUEL UP BETWEEN EVENTS

When competing in several events over a day:

- Be prepared and take food with you to the venue
- Do some research around food options you can purchase at the venues or near by
- Choose foods you are familiar with
- Choose carbohydrate-rich snacks such as fruit, low fat cereal bars, rice cakes + honey, banana sandwich, rice crackers or dry biscuits + vegemite, long life milk drinks. Easy to digest, lower fibre selections are ideal if you have a small break between games.
- If solid foods are a concern consider liquid meal supplements such as Sustagen Sport®, Fruit Smoothie or low fat flavoured milk
- Maintain fluid intake especially water or carbohydrate-rich fluids such as sports drinks, cordial or juice

FUEL UP FOR RECOVERY

- After exercise you need to rapidly replenish fluid and fuel stores to be prepared for the next event or training session.
- Consume a carbohydrate-rich drink or snack immediately after exercise particularly if there is a short recovery time between sessions.
- Nutritious carbohydrate foods that also contain moderate amounts of protein may help recovery by speeding muscle repair and assisting immune function.
- Resume your usual training eating pattern as soon as practical.
- Continue to drink regularly until fluid deficit is replaced.
- **Examples of food for Rapid recovery:**
 - o Sports drinks
 - o Lean meat sandwich
 - o Fresh or tinned fruit
 - o Sports, fruit or cereal bars
 - o Breakfast cereal + skim milk
 - o High protein yoghurt + nuts and seeds
 - o Fruit smoothie
 - o Pancakes + jam/honey
 - o Toasted muffin + peanut paste, crumpet or fruit loaf + jam
 - o Baked beans and eggs

