

NUTRITIONAL PREPARATION FOR FOOTBALL

“One of the most important factors that determine performance in football is the nutritional status of the player; therefore correct training is only part of the puzzle.”

At scientific-football.com we separate nutritional strategies into distinct phases. Each phase is approached in a totally different manner; giving the player the best chance of achieving the overall goal of preparing for, maintaining performance during, and recovering from exercise.

Day before the match

Planning your food intake for the day of a match starts a long time before you wake up on match day. Research shows that people who “load” carbohydrates in the days before a game consistently outperform those that only consume carbohydrates in the hours before kick-off.



What should I eat on the night before a game?

- ✓ Spaghetti bolognese with fruit crumble or fruit salad for dessert.

This meal is important on the day before all games; however even more so before games that kick-off in the morning or early afternoon as there is limited opportunity to eat on match-day.

Match-day

1. The hours before the match

A number of important factors come into play when planning the food intake on match-day. For example, a midday kick-off in a match which is played 3 hours away from home would require a totally different approach to an evening kick-off played at home.

When to eat?

The timing of food on the day of a match is dictated by the time of kick-off – see below.

Morning kick-off (11am)

- ✓ *Light breakfast (6am)*
- ✓ *Pre-match meal (8:30am)*

Afternoon kick-off (3pm)

- ✓ *Light breakfast (9am)*
- ✓ *Pre-match meal (midday)*

Evening kick-off (7pm)

- ✓ *Breakfast (9am)*
- ✓ *Light lunch (midday)*
- ✓ *Pre-match meal (4pm)*

What to eat?

The composition of food on match day is vitally important; research shows that low glycaemic index carbohydrates should make up the majority of carbohydrates consumed on the day of a match. If you are unsure which groups foods belong to, the list below may help to identify low, medium, and high glycaemic index foods.

LOW GLYCAEMIC INDEX FOODS

Breakfast Cereal

All-bran
Rolled Oats
Special K
Natural Muesli
Porridge

Staples

Wheat Pasta Shapes
New Potatoes
Meat Ravioli
Spaghetti
Tortellini (Cheese)
Brown Rice
White long grain rice
Sweet Potatoes
Instant Noodles
Wheat tortilla

Dairy

Whole milk
Skimmed milk
Chocolate milk
Sweetened yoghurt
Artificially Sweetened Yoghurt
Custard
Soy Milk

Bread

Heavy Mixed Grain
Whole Wheat

Snacks & Sweet Foods

Slim-Fast meal replacement
Snickers Bar (high fat)
Nut & Seed Muesli Bar
Sponge Cake
Nutella
Milk Chocolate
Peanuts
Walnuts
Cashew Nuts
Nuts and Raisins
Jam
Oatmeal Crackers

Beans

Kidney Beans (canned)
Butter Beans
Chick Peas
Haricot/Navy Beans
Lentils, Red
Lentils, Green
Yellow Split Peas

Vegetables

Frozen Green Peas
Frozen Sweet Corn
Raw Carrots
Boiled Carrots
Eggplant/Aubergine
Broccoli
Cauliflower
Cabbage
Mushrooms
Tomatoes
Chillies
Lettuce
Green Beans
Red Peppers
Onions

Fruits

Cherries
Plums
Grapefruit
Peaches
Peach, canned in natural juice
Apples
Pears
Dried Apricots
Grapes
Kiwi Fruit
Oranges
Strawberries
Prunes

MEDIUM GLYCAEMIC INDEX FOODS

Breakfast Cereal

Shredded Wheat
Porridge Oats
Special K

Fruits

Mango
Sultanas
Bananas
Raisins
Papaya
Figs
Pineapple

Bread

Croissant
Hamburger bun
Pita, white

Staples

Basmati Rice
Couscous
Taco Shells
Canned Potatoes
Baked Potatoes
Wild Rice

Vegetables

Beetroot

Snacks & Sweet Foods

Ryvita
Digestives
Blueberry muffin
Honey

Legumes (Beans)

Beans in Tomato Sauce

Dairy

Ice cream

HIGH GLYCAEMIC INDEX FOODS

Breakfast Cereal

Cornflakes
Sultana Bran
Branflakes
Coco Pops
Cheerios
Rice Krispies
Weetabix

Fruits

Watermelon
Dates

Bread

White
Bagel
French Baguette

Snacks & Sweet Foods

Pretzels
Water Crackers
Rice cakes
Puffed Crispbread
Donuts
Scones
Maple flavoured syrup

Vegetables

Pumkin

Staples

Instant White Rice
Short Grain White Rice
Fresh Mashed Potatoes
French Fries
Instant Mashed Potatoes

2. Immediately pre-match (1 hour before)

Research has shown that food consumption in this period, especially carbohydrates, can be detrimental to performance. Providing that the recommendations for food intake in the hours before exercise have been followed, minimal food should be consumed in this period as the low glycaemic index foods will help to maintain feelings of fullness and depress hunger. If absolutely necessary, carbohydrate containing drinks and energy bars can be consumed; both of which are available from www.scientific-football.com.



3. During the match

The goal here is to minimise the effects of dehydration whilst aiming to prolong the capacity to exercise. Due to the stop and go nature of football, it is difficult to consume fluids throughout exercise; however it is vitally important that players make an effort to consume carbohydrate-electrolyte drinks as often as possible throughout match-play. Ingesting approximately 150ml every 15 minutes should help to prevent dehydration and delay fatigue; both of which have been found to be detrimental to football performance. Please note that players should build up to consuming this amount of fluid during exercise as those unaccustomed to the volumes suggested may experience stomach discomfort. Scientifically proven nutrition products are available from www.scientific-football.com.



4. Immediately after the match

It is essential that rehydration and energy restoration are the main aims in this period. As intense exercise will suppress your appetite, it is a good idea to focus on drinking or eating small snacks immediately following exercise. Water should be avoided as it can actually dehydrate you further by “tricking” your body into producing more urine, therefore up to 2 litres of sports drinks should be consumed slowly here. Sources of protein such as bars or shakes (available from www.scientific-football.com) should be consumed in this period in order to allow the muscles to recover from exercise.



5. Within 3 hours of finishing the match

Once the appetite has returned (approximately 90 min post-match), players should aim to consume a balanced meal that includes sources of medium and high glycaemic index carbohydrates and salt-containing foods. Such meals help the body to recover fully from the exercise bout. Players should continue to rehydrate but plain water can now be used in this period.

Practical tips

- ✓ Maintain daily eating habits and ensure to account for the time that you wake up; if you sleep in you will eat later, or miss a meal, and your pattern is disturbed.
- ✓ Plan your meals on trips away or if you are at school or work, it is very easy to be tempted by fast food when you are hungry and have not made provisions for meals.
- ✓ Recovery starts as soon as the final whistle blows so plan ahead.
- ✓ Maintain hydration at all times (see the hydration recommendations sheet produced by www.scientific-football.com for more information).
- ✓ Sleep is a vitally important consideration for preparing for and recovering from exercise. Ensure that at least 8 hours of sleep are achieved each night and minimise the use of a TV or a computer before bed as this has been found to increase alertness and prevent sleep.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT THE WEBSITE OR CONTACT THE EMAIL ADDRESS BELOW

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