

IMPROVE YOUR EATING, IMPROVE YOUR GAME

Eating strategies to improve your performance on the soccer field

CARBOHYDRATES

- Carbohydrates help fuel your muscles and protect against muscle fatigue. Carbohydrates are the most important nutrient to help with your performance on the field.
- Eating carbohydrates is the equivalent of putting gas in the tank. When you eat carbohydrates, your body stores them in your liver and muscles in a storage form called *glycogen*. Your body breaks down glycogen as an energy source when you are physically active. You need to eat carbohydrates often to keep full stores of glycogen- the day before and day of your game, and during and after the game.
- Foods that contain carbohydrates include: cereals, oatmeal, bread, pasta, rice, crackers, and popcorn.

PROTEIN

- Eating protein helps to build and repair your muscles, to keep your body strong and build endurance.
- Foods that contain protein include: poultry; red meats; fish and shellfish; eggs; cheese; milk; yogurt; legumes; tofu and soy; and whey protein powder.
- Eat a source of protein at breakfast, lunch, and dinner, plus drink 16oz of cow's milk (or soy milk) every day. This will provide your body with the right amount of protein to grow and recover.
- Your body has a limit with how much protein it can absorb and use at one time. This is why it is important to eat a some protein at all of your meals in the day.

HEALTHY EATING

- Eating a variety of healthy foods will help your body and brain function at its best. It will help with your skills and endurance at soccer, and also help with your learning and grades at school.
- How can you eat healthy? At each meal, choose a fruit and/or a vegetable, a source of carbohydrate, a source of protein, a dairy product (i.e. milk, yogurt or cheese).
- Eat a meal or snack every three to four hours during the day.
- A well-balanced diet can include sugar/sweets. Fill up on healthy foods, and follow this with a treat.

EATING BEFORE ACTIVITY

- Eating before you exercise helps your body in a few ways. It provides your body with fuel to feed your brain and muscles. It prevents low blood sugars, which make you feel light-headed, tired, and interfere with your performance. It also helps you to train harder, and improve your endurance and strength.

- Choose a food that will not bother your stomach when you are active. If you are not eating before exercise, start with something small (i.e. a cracker or a sip of sports drink) and slowly increase the amount you can eat over time.
- Stay away from high protein and high fat foods (i.e. burger and French fries) before activity, because they may upset your stomach; instead, choose foods that contain carbohydrates and are easy to digest, such as fruit, crackers, yogurt, pretzels, or trail mix.

EATING DURING ACTIVITY

- If you are going to be exercising for more than one hour, you will need to refuel your body during the game with a small snack that contains carbohydrates.
- Some good options to try include: bananas; dried pineapples or apple rings; gummy bears; pretzels; banana breads; or sports gels. If it is too uncomfortable to have food in your stomach during exercise, choose a sports drink instead.

EATING AFTER ACTIVITY (RECOVERY)

- To help your body recover from exercise, it needs carbohydrates, protein, salt and fluids. This is especially important when you have back-to-back games or practices.
- The first hour after eating is the best time to eat, to help your body replenish its glycogen stores, rehydrate, and rebuild muscle.
- Your first priority should be drinking fluids. Choose plain water, milk, or a fruit smoothie.
- Try to eat a snack or a meal. Make sure it contains carbohydrates (for example, rice or pasta), some protein (for example, egg, lean beef, or chicken), and something salty (for example, olives or pickles, or extra salt added to your meal).
- You don't need to drink a sports beverage, take salt tablets or potassium supplements, or recovery vitamins. Everything your body needs is in the food you'll eat.

FLUIDS

- During hard exercise, your body loses a lot of water and salt in your sweat. Losing too much water and sweat will affect your performance. When you are dehydrated, you will feel dizzy and disoriented, lose your muscular endurance and strength, and may feel heat cramps.
- Most people will sweat 1-4lb every hour during activity. Speak to your coach about measuring your sweat rate. For every pound of sweat rate loss, you will need to drink 80-100% of that loss to stay hydrated.
- Aim to drink 3-8oz of a sports drink for every 15-20 minutes of play. Work on slowly training your body to tolerate drinking more fluids at halftime.
- Before and during your game, choose a sports drink, water, or fruit juice. On a tournament day or a hot day, a sports drink will be your best choice. After your game, choose water or milk.
- Sodas and energy drinks are not recommended.

SUGGESTED MEAL SCHEDULES BASED ON EVENT TIMES

IF YOU HAVE AN 8 A.M. MORNING GAME:

- The night before, eat a dinner that contains at least ½ plate of carbohydrates. Drink extra water.
- The morning of (6am), have a light meal (for example, yogurt and a banana). If you would like a larger meal, you will have to eat it around 5am to allow time for it to digest. If your body cannot handle any food during the morning of your game, eat your breakfast as a bedtime snack the night before.
- Eat a meal or snack, and drink water or milk, after your game.

IF YOU HAVE A 10 A.M. MORNING GAME:

- The night before, eat a dinner that contains at least ½ plate of carbohydrates. Drink extra water.
- The morning of (7am), you can eat a regular breakfast that contains carbohydrates and some protein (for example, a toasted bagel with peanut butter, fruit, and a glass of milk).
- Eat a meal or snack, and drink water or milk, after your game.

IF YOU HAVE A 2 P.M. AFTERNOON GAME:

- The morning of, you can eat a regular breakfast that contains carbohydrates (for example, scrambled eggs on toast with fruit salad and a glass of milk), followed by a light early lunch at 10am (for example, hummus with pita and baby carrots).
- Eat a meal or snack, and drink water or milk, after your game.

IF YOU HAVE AN 8 P.M. EVENING GAME:

- Eat a regular breakfast and lunch, both containing carbohydrates. Eat an early dinner around 5pm that also contains carbohydrates (for example, rice with salmon and green peas, with a glass of milk).
- You may need a small snack around 7pm (for example, a yogurt cup).
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day.
- Eat a meal or snack, and drink water or milk, after your game.

IF YOU HAVE AN ALL-DAY TOURNAMENT EVENT:

- For the days leading up to the tournament, eat well and focus on eating three regular meals a day.
- On the day of the event, eat a regular breakfast (for example, Cheerios with milk and fresh fruit).
- Plan on eating a snack every 60-90 minutes throughout the day.
- If you have a lunch break, choose a meal with some carbohydrate and protein that will sit comfortably in your stomach (for example, a turkey sandwich with slices of cucumber, trail mix, and a glass of milk).
- Focus on staying hydrated, with lots of fluids throughout the day. Choose water, a sports drink, a fruit smoothie, or juice.