

# NUTRITION FOR SOCCER

Below is an overview of the most effective way to fuel your body before, during and after soccer games and practice.

Football is a game that requires the player work in sporadic fashion in which players perform repeated episodes of both low and high intensity, like jogging to take a throw in or sprinting onto a pass. **Carbohydrates** are the main source of energy during soccer and should be considered the most important ingredient when fuelling the body.

## Before a game

High glycemic (high GI) carbohydrates should be the most dominant source eaten with every meal as these are rapidly digested and absorbed by your body ready to use for energy. Research suggests that the more muscle glycogen you have in your body before a game; the longer and harder you will be able to work for during the game.

It is recommended that you still include a portion of vegetables, a moderate amount of high-quality protein (chicken, turkey, or lean red meat) and a source of good fats (avocado, nuts, seeds, olives).

This should be consumed at least one hour before a game!!!

## High GI foods

Mashed Potato, white bread, watermelon, sweet potato, bagel, bran flakes, cheerio's, jelly beans, rice cakes, cornflakes, baked potato, puffed wheat, baguette, white rice (steamed), honey, raisins .



High glycemic	
Glucose	100
Carrots	92
Honey	87
Corn flakes	80
Whole-meal bread	72
White rice	72
New potatoes	70
White bread	69
Shredded wheat	67
Brown rice	66
Beets	64
Raisins	64
Bananas	62

Ideas for healthy meals game or practice days			
Early morning	Mid morning	Afternoon	Snacks
Bowl of cornflakes and 2 slices of toast with jam	Bagel with cream cheese	Fruit smoothie and a turkey salad baguette	Rice Pudding
Omelette with avocado, spinach and wholemeal toast	Wholemeal pitta with humus	Grilled chicken breast with pasta	Rice Cakes with peanut butter
Whole grain pancakes with fruit	Beetroot and cashew salad	Tuna and avocado wrap	Greek yoghurt with fruit and honey

## Post-Game Nutrition

During a game we can use around 250 grams of carbohydrates to fuel the body. For this reason it is important that we start to refuel the body as quickly as possible to optimise recovery. To maximise recovery a snack should be consumed within 30 minutes after competition. Snacks could include fruit such as bananas, raisins, water melon and dried fruit as well as high carbohydrate based sports drinks such as Gatorade. For the first 2 hours after competition choose foods with a high glycaemic index.

A main meal should be consumed within two hours of the game consisting of moderate GI foods such as pasta, potato's and rice.

Protein should also be consumed in the recovery period to aid in the repair and growth of damaged muscle tissue. A protein based snack containing 20-25 grams could be consumed immediately after a game.

Foods that will aid recovery should consist of the following:

### Carbohydrates

To optimize recovery and replenish glycogen stores

Moderate to high Glycaemic Index

Potatoes

Rice

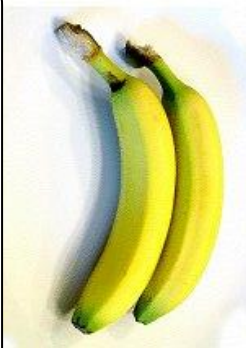
Pasta

Wholemeal bread

Breakfast Cereal

Flavoured yoghurt

Fruit Smoothie



### Proteins

To improve repair and growth of muscle tissues

To maintain and increase muscle mass

20-25 grams immediately after exercise

Chicken breast

Turkey breast

Fish (tuna, salmon, seafood)

Eggs

Greek Yoghurt

Milk

Cashew nuts

Almonds



## Hydration



During physical exertion our body temperature increases. Our body then begins to sweat as a coping mechanism to cool us down. Therefore, it is vital we replace the fluids that we lose through sweat!

Soccer is a high intensity sport that is extremely physically demanding and proper hydration will reduce your risk of injury as well as help you maintain peak fitness levels after the match. You need to consume more water and fluids than normal while playing soccer to replenish the fluids lost from sweating, keeping us focussed and in peak condition. The amount of water we lose will ultimately depend on how hard a player works (intensity) and the humidity and weather conditions.

It is suggested that hydration should begin 24 hours before a game and the majority of intake should come from fluids in particular water, roughly 80% from fluids and the rest coming from foods. The American Council on Exercise suggests drinking around 17 to 20 ounces 3 to 5 hours before the start of the match. Also they suggest taking on 7 to 10 ounces every 10 to 20 minutes during exercise with a further 8 ounces of fluids to be consumed post-match.

([www.acefitness.org](http://www.acefitness.org), 2016)

The most effective method would be to drink in sips rather than consuming large measures by chugging even when it may feel necessary to do so.

## Sports Drinks



Sports drinks are a good source of high GI carbohydrates in the form of simple sugars. They can be taken during a game to increase glycogen stores and provide us with a top up of energy. They can also be taken immediately after a game in order to start replenishing our energy stores and aid in the refuelling process.

As we sweat we lose certain minerals such as sodium and potassium (electrolytes). These minerals are vital for many bodily functions such as nerve transmissions. Sports drinks will also help to replace the electrolytes lost through sweat.