

The Importance of Pre-game nutrition for performance and recovery

Start 2 Days before game

Players should start their carbohydrate loading **2 days** before match day.

Carbohydrate is stored in the muscles as fuel called (glycogen) and it takes **24 – 48 hours** for the muscle to be fully restored and recovered after exercise.

Glycogen is the fuel burned in anaerobic activities. Anytime you are out of breath it is this store that is raided and if the store is empty you will run out of energy. Eating meat and no carbohydrates in the days before a performance is likely to cause you to run out of energy during the game.

Tips to maximise Carbohydrate store:

Rest, no hard training sessions where the carbohydrate stores would be used as this would not leave enough time to re-fuel.

Stretching routines are also a good idea.

Eat often, every 2 – 4 hours will help load the muscle stores

Consume high carbohydrate foods: every meal should include bread, rice, pasta, fruit, and vegetables

Avoid new foods

Avoid spicy or high fat foods they can slow digestion

Avoid alcohol 24 hours before the game

Match Day Food

Wake up **5 hours** before your game.

All your energy for the game should already be stored in the muscles if you have eaten the right foods.

Therefore large meals are unnecessary because any energy intake will not be able to be called upon during the same day.

It is important to keep the blood sugar levels consistent during the game day.

Therefore **AVOID** foods like:

- **Chocolate Bars**
- **High fibre muffins**
- **High sugar cookies**
- **Beans**
- **Sweets**

These cause a sudden increase in the blood sugar levels and, in response, the body produces insulin to bring these back down. The overall effect is that the blood sugar levels drop below the normal consistent level, making you feel tired, meaning you run out of energy before the end of the game. "**This is known as the Mars bar effect**"

Drink lots of water dehydration can cause depletion of muscle stores

Do eat easy to digest foods - High in carbohydrate, moderate fat and low in fibre

Therefore **EAT** foods like:

- **Ripe bananas**
- **Sports drink**
- **Yoghurt**
- **Sandwiches, peanut butter, lean ham**
- **Sports bar**
- **Pasta**
- **Coffee or tea is ok, as long as you drink plenty of water as well**

Your last meal should be consumed **2 – 4 hours** before your warm-up starts

Suggestions towards your diet prior to the game include:

Breakfast: Bowl of cereal, fruit, toast peanut butter, juice

Lunch: Sandwich with, lean meat, fruit sports bar, water.

Rest of the time during build up before the match: 1 – 2 litres of sports drinks to keep your blood sugar stable

The most important thing is to work out what works for you and make it part of your pre-game routine for every game!