



STADIUM COMMUNITY BENEFITS INITIATIVE

NUTRITIONAL RESOURCE PACK



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INTRODUCTION

STEPHEN ROONEY ANTRIM SENIOR HURLER

“Nutrition for recovery and nutrition for performance have been integral in my preparations for inter-county hurling. I have felt the difference in my ability to get the best out of myself at times when it matters most”

“GOOD NUTRITION IS AT THE CORE OF MY SUCCESS”
Cristiano Ronaldo



The Department for Communities, Belfast City Council, the Irish Football Association and Gaelfast are working together to deliver the Stadium Community Benefits Initiative (SCBI) which focuses on maximising the potential of the new National Football Stadium at Windsor Park and the Casement Park Stadium.

The initiative continues for 10 years (2016–2026) and will benefit from £150,000 per year investment. The overarching objective is to improve the quality of life now and for future generations.

Themes which will guide the implementation of the initiative's Action Plan include:

- encouraging wellbeing and healthy lifestyle choices
- improving community engagement through schools, clubs and youth organisations
- supporting new and existing clubs to increase their capacity to deliver, creating more participation opportunities for the people of Belfast.

This nutrition booklet aims to increase awareness and educate young people and athletes on the important components of sports nutrition in order to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy a promising career.



WHAT SHOULD I BE EATING AND DRINKING TO GET MATCH FIT?

Most people are aware that a healthy balanced diet is essential for optimum health and wellbeing. For active people who exercise at high intensity on a regular basis, the importance of good nutrition and a healthy diet is even more crucial. Within this booklet, we will look at some key sports nutrition messages to prepare you before, during and after training and matches. The booklet is designed for use by players, parents and coaches to help fuel your sport and produce winning results.

IS SPORTS NUTRITION REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?

Yes! Your body requires the correct fluid and fuel at the right times, to help it function to its best potential for everyday living, work, study and most importantly to optimise your sporting performance.

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In the following sections, we are going to look at key messages on carbohydrates, protein, hydration and anti-oxidants to assist your immune function and keep you match fit. We are also going to look at top tips to help keep you on track!

SECTION ONE

CARBOHYDRATES: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Carbohydrate is the main source of energy that the body uses during exercise. So it makes sense that athletes need to consider the carbohydrate content of their meals before, during and after exercise. We will look at good sources of carbohydrate, practical ways of incorporating them into your diet remembering that eating for sport should still be enjoyable.

SECTION TWO

HOW MUCH PROTEIN, WHEN AND HOW?

Protein is essential for the growth and repair of tissues within the body. This is even more important in the context of sport, given the high risk of injury due to competition and overtraining. We will look at the good sources of protein in the diet and how to incorporate them to help aid recovery following training and matches. We will also look at whether protein supplements are needed post exercise.

SECTION THREE

THE 'F' FACTOR: FLUID AND HYDRATION

During exercise our muscles produce heat which is lost from the body through sweat. Whenever we lose sweat we are at risk of dehydration and poor performance, therefore it is extremely important that players have a hydration strategy in place to combat this. We look at the type, timing and volumes of fluid which you need to consume during training and match play to maintain optimum performance and get the best results for you and your team.

SECTION FOUR

ANTI-OXIDANTS AND IMMUNE FUNCTION

Everyone knows that we should aim to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables everyday, but most people don't know why. Here we look at different ways to get your daily dose of anti-oxidants which can help strengthen the immune system. This is extremely important for players who can sometimes become run down/ 'burnt out' as a result of intense training and competition, especially during the winter months when coughs, colds and flu can spread easily.

SECTION ONE

CARBOHYDRATES:

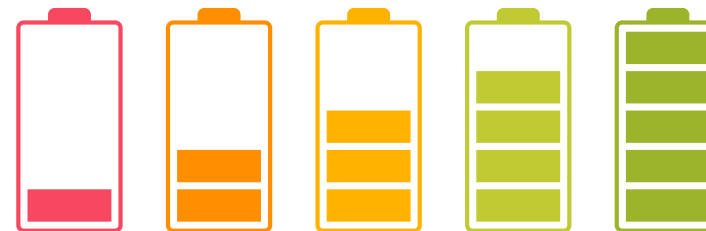
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

MARISSA CALLAGHAN
CAPTAIN OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND
WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM

“Eating healthy is something I enjoy and it helps with my physical and mental well-being. As a footballer it's important as it keeps me in the best shape to perform at the highest level.”

“DIET SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCES ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE. AN ADEQUATE DIET IN TERMS OF QUANTITY AND QUALITY, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER TRAINING AND COMPETITION WILL MAXIMISE PERFORMANCE.”

International Olympic Committee Consensus statement on sports nutrition, 2018.



Carbohydrate is the main source of energy that the body uses. We store carbohydrates as glycogen in the body in our muscles and liver. During training and competition, it is important to increase your intake of carbohydrate as you will be using more energy than in everyday life. Think of your body like a machine running on batteries – without batteries (i.e. carbohydrates) it simply will not have the energy to function properly. Carbohydrates are found in a wide range of everyday foods, so no matter what your budget or personal likes/dislikes there is plenty of choice!

Generally speaking, whenever you are training and competing you should aim for 60% of your daily energy intake to be from carbohydrates. This can be achieved by ensuring you eat a range of carbohydrate rich meals and snacks before, during and after exercise to meet the energy needs for your sport. Your carbohydrate intake should be a blend of starchy carbohydrates to make up the bulk of your meals (think pasta, potatoes, vegetables, rice, quinoa etc) with a small amount of simple/sweet carbohydrates included to increase the carbohydrate intake (for example adding honey, maple syrup to porridge is a perfect way of combining starchy and simple carbohydrates). Ways of combining starchy and simple carbohydrates are shown in the 'Simple meals for you to try' section and in the recipe pack at the end of the booklet.

On a daily basis you should be aiming to eat a CHO rich breakfast, lunch, dinner plus two snacks (one pre and one post exercise). You should eat according to your appetite and if you are still hungry then it is a very good indication that you haven't consumed enough calories from carbohydrate foods. By eating more carbohydrate in your diet you will replenish the body's glycogen stores, which are broken down during exercise, helping you to exercise for longer without becoming tired or impairing your performance.

Follow some of our top tips for carbohydrate rich meals and snacks to help boost your performance.

SIMPLE MEALS FOR YOU TO TRY

BREAKFAST

Porridge with honey or golden syrup

Pancakes with maple syrup

Toast with margarine, sliced banana, honey, marmite, jam, peanut butter

Poached egg on thick sliced wholemeal toast

Muesli or breakfast cereal with semi-skimmed milk and sliced fresh fruits

Grilled Tomatoes with thick sliced wholemeal toast

A 150ml glass of fruit juice or fruit smoothie made with natural smooth yoghurt (which will also count as one of your five a day). *If you are unsure as to what a portion of fruit or vegetables look like, why not visit:

<https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/the-eatwell-guide-and-resources> for more information.

Try making your own fruit smoothie with fresh fruit of your choice, milk and low-fat yoghurt

Baked beans on toast with mushrooms

Bacon medallions with thick sliced wholemeal toast (bacon buddy)

Oats/granola with 0% fat yogurt with fresh fruit

Oats with dried coconut, flaxseed, honey/syrup

LUNCH

Pasta dishes with vegetables and sauce are great, but try to avoid creamy sauces and mayonnaise as this will only increase the fat content of your diet

Sandwiches are quick, easy and nutritious when you are on the go. Always choose thickly sliced bread pre-exercise as opposed to thin slices as they will contain more carbohydrate.

Baked potatoes with low fat fillings (beans/chicken/tuna). Try adding some cheese, which is high in calcium which is essential for growing bones.

Beans on toast, good source of carbohydrate and protein for growing bodies

Toast with banana and honey or a light sprinkling of sugar

Couscous (quick and easy just add hot water) try adding some herbs/spices and some roasted vegetables adding to your 5 a day.

Quick cooking noodles/rice/pasta

Risotto made with tuna, lean ham or chicken

Homemade vegetable/ lentil and carrot/ leek and potato soup (just avoid adding lots of cream and butter), really quick, easy, inexpensive and will warm you up after outside training!

Tortilla base pizza with lean meat choice and lots of veg

Chicken burrito bowl (chicken, rice, salsa, low fat cheese, peppers, sweetcorn, other veg)



MAIN MEALS

Home made pizza (made with soda bread or tortilla wrap), just remember to bulk on vegetarian toppings such as sweetcorn, peppers, mushrooms, olives add some low fat cheese and add lean meat such as grilled chicken, ham or tuna.

Rice/pasta with low fat meat and vegetable sauce. Check out the recipe section and make homemade Bolognese sauce.

Stir fry with your choice of meat and lots of vegetables – add your favourite herbs and spices

Baked/poached fish with jacket potatoes and vegetables

Roast chicken (drain juice and take skin off before serving) with jacket potato and steamed vegetables

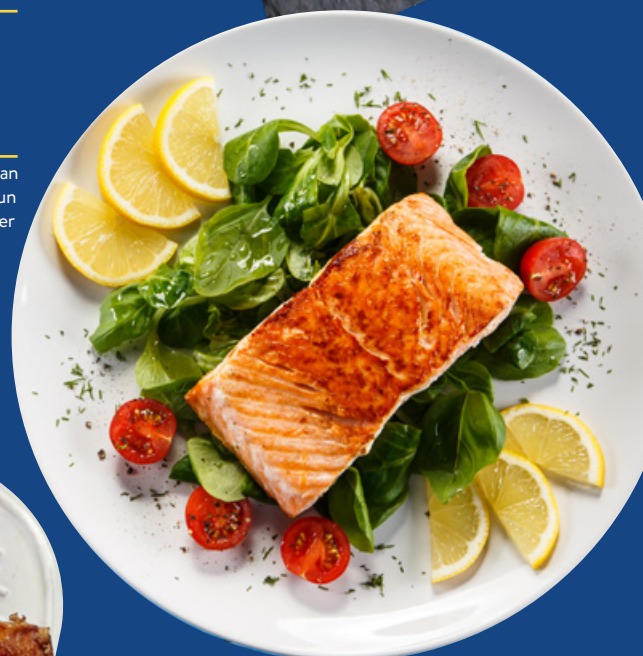
Grilled chicken breast /fish with mashed potato/sweet potato or boiled rice. Using a microwave packet of rice can also help speed things up when you are in a hurry!

Reduced fat sausages/ bacon medallions, 2 baked potatoes and portion of beans with a side salad.

Salmon fillet cooked in low calorie dressing e.g. sweet chilli dressing, portion of baby potatoes with mixed veg.

Thick cut ham roasted in a low calorie rub/marinade e.g. BBQ, honey mustard with boiled potatoes and a portion of mixed veg.

Beef burger made using lean mince meat, wholegrain bun and salad with oven/air fryer homemade chips/wedges.



DESSERTS

For those with a sweet tooth!

Fruit crumble with custard – use fresh fruits that are in season

Pancakes with fresh fruit

Low fat yoghurt and fromage frais with fresh slices fruit. You can even add a small amount of sugar free flavoured syrup if you wish.

Jelly and custard (for the kid in you!)

Milk puddings (rice pudding, semolina) with jam and dried fruits

Low fat ice cream (e.g. Halo top), or frozen 0% fat yogurt with sugar free syrup (add fresh fruit when serving!)

Iced coffee with low sugar syrup



CARBOHYDRATE RICH SNACKS

These are particularly useful to start the process of refuelling once you finish exercising. Within 30 minutes of exercise, you should aim to have a small amount of carbohydrate subject to your appetite to start replenishing your glycogen immediately after training or a match. Some of the snacks below are ideal to have either in the changing room or the way home from a match – so get yourself organised!

You should then follow up with a carbohydrate rich meal within 2-3 hours, around travelling home from the venue. Try to stay away from snacks that are high in fat and sugar and fill up on these tasty and nutritious alternatives:

Pancakes or crumpets with honey, syrup or sugar and cinnamon

Multigrain cereal bars (with fruit fillings)

Fresh fruit, dried fruit and nuts (remember that 30g of dried fruit = another one of your five a day)

Fruit/plain natural yoghurt with added raisins/ sultanas/berries

Flavoured milk drink/ fruit smoothies

Toast/scones with low fat spread and jam

Fruit squash, fruit juice or sports drink

Low fat rice pudding/custard (can be pre-bought and easy to transport), just remember a spoon!

Bagel with jam/spread

Crackers/rice cakes with low fat spread

Low fat crisps



POINTS TO REMEMBER

You need to fine-tune your carbohydrate practices in training. Don't make any radical changes to your diet just before a big match. Practice makes perfect so work towards getting a carbohydrate strategy that works for you.



Choose carbohydrate rich meals and snacks that are practical, enjoyable and are based on tried and tested experiences. Eating for sport should still be enjoyable!



Make the most of every opportunity. If you have any natural breaks/ substitutions during training or match play, take on some extra carbohydrate if you can. This could be from sports drinks/ jelly babies/ jellybeans or a quick cereal bar. This will top up your energy stores and help reduce tiredness and fatigue ultimately improving your performance.





SECTION TWO

HOW MUCH PROTEIN, WHEN AND HOW?

DR MICHAEL MCKILLOP MBE
PARALYMPIC MIDDLE DISTANCE RUNNER

[[Nutrition is one of the key components you need to consider for optimal performance. As a developing athlete it's important to eat well to train well and to compete. But remember don't deprive yourself of some nice treats, after all sport is to be enjoyable.]]

Protein is not an available source of energy during exercise except in the case of extreme endurance athletes. It is however, essential for the growth and repair of tissues in the body. Given this role in the body, it is extremely important that players regularly undertaking intense exercise include good quality sources of protein as part of their daily diet (see examples and recipes over the page).

There are some myths surrounding protein, including the consumption of large amounts of protein to build muscle. This strategy is only useful in the case of professional body builders who are altering other components of their diet under the guidance of a sports nutritionist. Excessive protein intake may increase total calorific intake, increasing the chances of weight gain as excess protein will be turned into fat!

What if I am injured?

Players who have experienced muscle or tissue damage should focus on eating good quality sources of protein during their recovery period. Some examples of good quality protein and how to include them in your diet are shown below.

Protein and recovery

There is some scientific evidence which suggests that the combination of carbohydrate and protein helps to replenish the body's carbohydrate stores more effectively and prepares you for your next workout. In order to benefit from this, you should try and include a source of good quality protein in your post exercise meal. For example: wholemeal pasta with a lean beef and tomato sauce (see recipe provided) provides carbohydrate, protein and anti-oxidants from the tomato sauce. You could also consider adding a glass of skimmed/semi-skimmed milk along with your recovery meal.

What about protein supplements?

For younger players (under the age of 18) it is not advisable to consume protein supplements or supplements which contain amino acids (such as branched chain amino acids). This is due to the additional effort required by the kidneys to process the nitrogen contained within these products. The best strategy is to take a 'food first approach', save your money and invest in some natural sources of protein which have no risk of producing a positive doping result. At professional/county level, following an examination of training and dietary intake, the lead sports nutritionist may make the decision to supplement players with protein for a short period of time, but this will under close observation and ensuring that there is no risk of producing a positive doping test, which is extremely important. Play clean to win!

GOOD SOURCES OF PROTEIN

PRACTICAL TIPS ON PROTEIN



One portion of protein = 15-25g protein e.g. a pint of milk, a medium chicken breast, tin of tuna, 3 poached eggs, 100g tempeh (v), 1 cup of lentils (v)

Choose a variety of protein rich foods

Protein intake should be distributed throughout the day, don't just rely on your evening meal to fulfil your daily requirements.

Always choose lean meat and low-fat dairy products as many protein-rich foods also contain hidden sources of saturated fats. Saturated fats are linked to an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease in later life.

DAIRY SOURCES

Milk: another high-quality source of protein which also provides calcium that is essential for growing children and adolescents. Milk is now known to be a 'superfood for athletes' in the post exercise period. A great example of a post exercise recovery snack is one pint skimmed/semi-skimmed milk (providing around 20g protein) along with a high carbohydrate snack such as a cereal bar, premade fruit salad and/or banana. This will greatly aid muscular recovery and carbohydrate store replenishment.

Cheese: great in sandwiches, baked potatoes and added to soups, try and look for low fat versions which are now widely effective and is often just the same price as the full fat version!

Yoghurts: a great post exercise carbohydrate and protein snack. Try using plain natural low-fat yoghurt (costs around 45p/500g tub) then add fresh fruit, dried fruit or nuts.

ANIMAL SOURCES

Eggs: the highest quality source of protein. Try omelettes, boiled, poached or scrambled eggs with toast to combine protein and carbohydrate, avoid frying! Adding an extra egg white to your scrambled egg can also be useful after

Tuna: canned/fresh, if using canned go for tuna canned in sunflower oil which is also a good source of the anti-oxidant vitamin E and is a heart healthy oil.

White turkey & chicken meat: perfect addition to sandwiches for a lunch rich in carbohydrate and protein or for making a quick stir fry

Lean beef: a good source of protein, iron and extremely versatile

Fish: oily or white fish are both good sources of protein. Oily fish have the added benefit of providing omega 3 fatty acids which are good for your heart, so you should try to incorporate them into your diet if possible. Oily fish include: herrings, kippers, mackerel, pilchards, salmon, trout, swordfish, eel, crab, fresh tuna and sardines (can all be tinned). White fish include: cod, whiting, pollock, plaice, sea bass and monkfish.

PLANT SOURCES OF PROTEIN

Peanuts (not salted)

Wholemeal bread

Baked beans, see the BBQ bake bean recipe

Tofu, great substitute for meat in stir fries

Almonds, can be added to yoghurts or sprinkled on salads

Lentils – great in sauces, stews and casseroles. Why not try the carrot and lentil soup recipe (see later)

Chick peas, see the spicy chickpea recipe for a great tasty high protein snack

White & brown rice, brown rice contains slightly more protein, so ideal post exercise

Soybeans

Hemp – can be added to oatmeal, smoothies etc.

Tempeh – a good replacement for meat, similar to tofu

Kidney beans – can be added to stews, soups and curries

Quinoa – can be added to salad, nice dishes, curries

Seitan – another replacement for meat, can be used in main dishes e.g. chicken, beef dishes

If you are a vegetarian or vegan athlete, you need to make a special effort to ensure that your diet provides enough good quality protein. By mixing different sources of vegetable proteins such as baked beans on toast, lentils and rice or a peanut butter sandwich you will achieve good protein combinations. Vegetarian and vegan athletes also have to give extra consideration to the iron content of their diet due to the avoidance of red meat. To increase the iron content of their diet they should increase their intake of non-haem/plant sources of iron. This includes dark green leafy vegetables such as: broccoli, savoy cabbage, spinach, curly kale and whole grains.

Word of caution: whilst vegetarian and vegan athletes need to be aware of the iron content of their diet, iron supplements should NOT be used by any player as a 'back up' source of iron. Iron supplements should only be used following the diagnosis of iron deficiency anaemia by a GP. High doses of iron can prevent the absorption of other essential trace elements in the body with serious side effects. If a coach/parent suspects an athlete may be iron deficient they should refer them to their GP immediately. Plant based sources of iron such as baked beans, lentils, tofu, kale, dark chocolate (can double up as your sweet snack after a training session or match!)

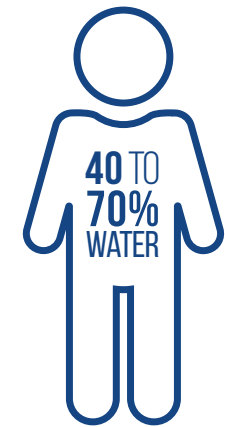
SECTION THREE

THE 'F' FACTOR: FLUID AND HYDRATION

ANDY WATERWORTH

HEAD OF THE IRISH FA JD ACADEMY AND
FORMER IRISH LEAGUE FOOTBALLER

“I’ve actually always enjoyed eating well. It helps me stay focused as I know it’s something positive I can control and I’ve certainly found it has put me in a good place as I have got older and haven’t been able to train as much on the pitch. I feel my diet has been key to my success over the years which has helped me enjoy a long career in football. When I eat well, I feel well.”



WHY IS WATER SO IMPORTANT?

Our bodies are made up of between 40 to 70 % water depending on age, weight, gender and body composition, so it makes sense that it has many important functions within the body.

During exercise our muscles produce heat which the body must get rid of to prevent overheating, and heatstroke. To do this, heat from the muscles is transferred to the blood, blood flow to the skin is increased and heat is lost by the evaporation of sweat from the skin.

Sweat comes from water in the body so we need to make sure we replace this vital fluid to prevent dehydration which (as scientific studies have shown) leads to poor performance. As with carbohydrate intake it is important to get your hydration strategy right before, during and after exercise, thereby ensuring you are fully hydrated. This in turn will improve your performance.

HYDRATION

PRE – EXERCISE

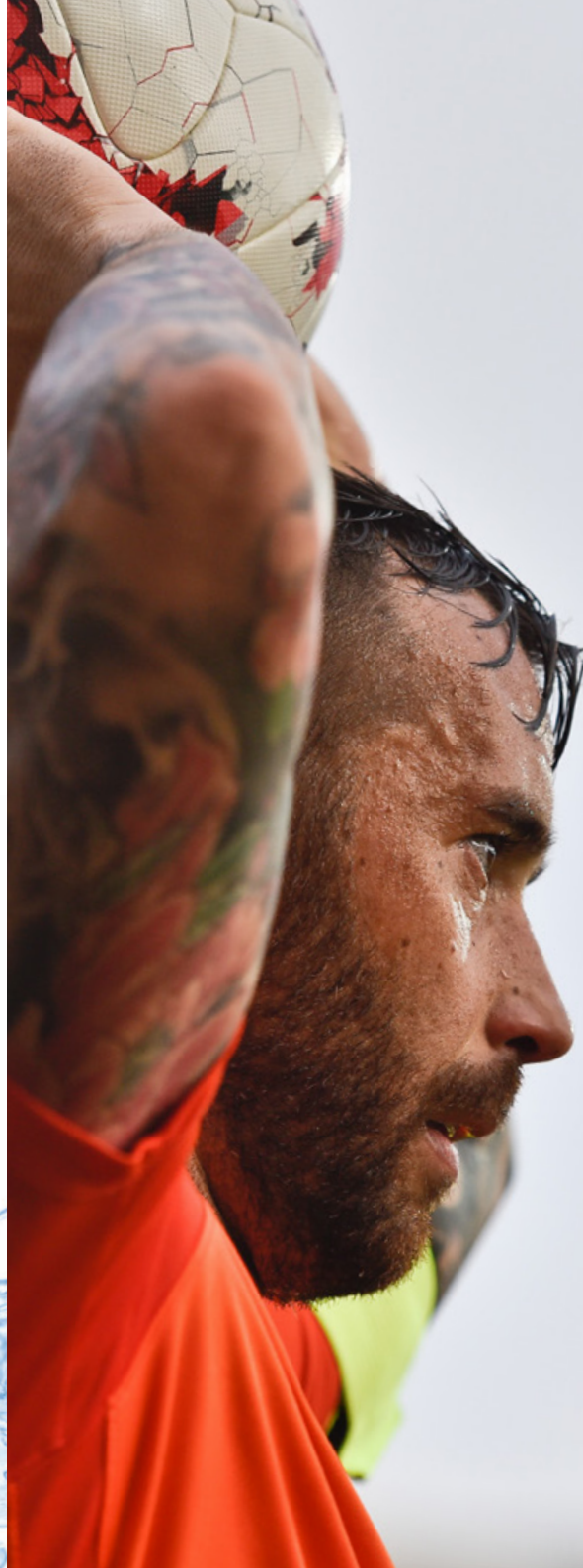
The aim of pre-exercise hydration is to start every training session/match well hydrated. In addition to including fluid as part of your daily routine, you should aim to drink between 400-600 mls of water, sports drink or other fluid in the two hours prior to exercise.



Hydration status can be monitored through the use of 'pee charts', which grade the colour of urine. Urine, which is pale yellow in colour, suggests good hydration.



REMEMBER: It is important to practice hydration strategy before all training sessions. By doing so you will avoid feeling bloated and heavy whilst exercising.



DURING EXERCISE

During exercise the aim is to replace fluid losses incurred by sweating, thus preventing excessive dehydration. Every athlete should develop his or her own strategy for drinking during sport. This will depend on how much sweat is usually lost during exercise and will be affected by the heat and humidity of exercising conditions.

Generally speaking, for exercise which lasts over an hour, a guide might be to aim to drink 150-250 mls every 15 minutes during exercise to offset fluid losses. You should make the most of every opportunity to take on fluid, so always have your own drinks bottle handy to keep your hydration levels topped up.

Providing an additional source of carbohydrate during exercise can help improve performance by topping up your energy levels. One way to achieve this is the use of sports drinks. Sports drinks are designed to tackle both fluid and energy loss by providing: fuel in the form of carbohydrate, fluid to replace what is lost as sweat and sodium to help the body retain fluid. The combination of these three factors will help prevent dehydration, ultimately improving your performance and recovery.

If you choose to use sports drinks (which is personal preference) it is important to remember to following to ensure good dental health:

- Drink quickly and avoid sipping slowly
- Don't 'hold' or 'swish' drinks around your mouth
- Brush teeth twice a day using fluoride toothpaste
- Visit your dentist regularly



AFTER EXERCISE

After exercise the aim is to FULLY REHYDRATE! How much fluid you need will depend on how much you have lost. This will vary depending on the duration and intensity of exercise performed as well as the climatic conditions – on a hotter day you will sweat more and will therefore need more fluid to rehydrate before your next training session.

As a general guide you should aim to drink 500mls of fluid following exercise. This amount can then be increased until the colour of the urine returns to pale yellow and you are fully hydrated. Your choice of fluid post exercise could be water, water with diluted squash which contains sugar, sports drink or milk (see earlier).

Choosing the right fluid post exercise (which contains carbohydrate and/or protein), will help you rehydrate and 'top up' your muscle glycogen stores in preparation for your next training session.

SECTION FOUR

ANTI-OXIDANTS, IMMUNE FUNCTION AND SPORT

CATHY CAREY

ANTRIM SENIOR FOOTBALLER (LADIES)

“Nutrition is essential for supporting my health and training needs. A good diet provides me with enough energy to meet the demands of training and exercise. In addition to helping me perform optimally, it facilitates my recovery.”

“EXERCISE IS KING.
NUTRITION IS QUEEN. PUT
THEM TOGETHER &
YOU'VE GOT A KINGDOM.”

Jack Lalanne



Everyone knows that we should aim to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day for the maintenance of good health. But what most people don't know is that fruit and vegetables contain a combination of anti-oxidant vitamins and minerals which can help strengthen the immune system protecting our bodies against coughs, colds and flu. Here we look briefly at what the immune system is, why proper functioning of it is crucial for athletic performance and, most importantly, how we can ensure our diets are rich in anti-oxidant vitamins to produce winning results. This is especially important when you are training at high intensity, often outside where it can be cold and wet!

What is the immune system?

The immune system is a highly complex group of cells and hormones which work together to defend the body from germs and viruses we come in contact with. If for some reason, immune function is compromised then our ability to fight off germs will be reduced and we will be at increased risk of developing more coughs, colds and flus than if we were fighting fit.

Are athletes at increased risk of infection?

Unfortunately, yes. There are several reasons why players at amateur, semi professional and elite level are at increased risk of developing infections as a result of decreased immune function. These include intense training sessions and competition without sufficient recovery time, training in cold, damp weather (during the summer and winter!) as well as the physical and mental demands which sport places on the body. All of these contribute to the weakening of the immune system.

You don't want to miss training.... do you?

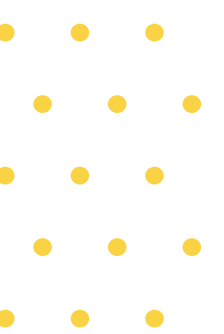
If you suffer from coughs, colds and flus on a regular basis as a result of decreased immune function then it makes for missed training sessions. This diminishes the opportunity to perfect skills and improve fitness levels which ultimately result in poor performance on an individual and team basis.

Is there anything that you can do to improve immune function?

YES, by ensuring that you get enough rest between training and competition and eating plenty of foods rich in anti-oxidants, the immune system will have everything it requires for optimum functioning, helping to keep you fighting fit.

What are anti-oxidants?

Anti-oxidants are compounds which protect the body from highly reactive molecules known as free radicals, which the body produces naturally during exercise. Anti-oxidant vitamins found naturally in our diet include vitamins A, C and E. It is important that athletes ensure they regularly eat foods containing these vitamins, especially during periods of intense training and in the run up to an important competition or tournament.



Can I just take a multivitamin and mineral supplement to get all these anti-oxidants?

If you are unsure as to what a healthy balanced diet is how to get your five a day, why not visit: <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/the-eatwell-guide-and-resources> for more information. We have included some top tips on which foods contain these anti-oxidant vitamins to guarantee you achieve your recommended intakes.

Vitamin A can be consumed from animal and plant sources so don't panic if you don't like some sources of vitamin A. There are lots of ways to include it in the diet. Animal sources of vitamin A include: milk, liver, egg yolks, and fish liver oils. However, milk and eggs are the most likely sources and are extremely versatile. In general, plant sources of vitamin A include any fruit or vegetable that is highly coloured either, red, orange, yellow or green.

As you can see some sources of vitamin A are also good sources of vitamin C, so it is easier than you think to get all the anti-oxidants you need to improve your sporting performance.

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VITAMIN C (ASCORBIC ACID)

The richest sources of vitamin C include citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, grapefruit (as well as their juices), strawberries, blackcurrants, watermelon, tomatoes, potatoes, green peppers and green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, cabbage and lettuce. Eating fruit and vegetables on a daily basis can be challenging, however the key is to try as many as possible to determine your likes and dislikes. Once you find out which fruits and vegetables are favourites you can ensure they are included as part of their diet by trying out different ways to serve them.

Try out some of these quick and easy vitamin C meals and snacks for top results:

Fruit salad: made with 1 orange, 2 kiwis, strawberries and 100mls orange juice can make a healthy breakfast, dessert or after work snack. If you don't like the taste or texture of fresh fruit or you don't always have time to prepare fresh fruit, pots or small tins of fruit in natural juice as opposed to syrup can be just as healthy.

A glass of orange and/or grapefruit juice served with any meal will boost vitamin C levels and makes a great carbohydrate rich snack.

Clementines, mandarins and tangerines make a great addition to any lunchbox. Try peeling before serving to make eating them easier, and where possible choose varieties without seeds as many people dislike fruit because it has pips.

Strawberries with natural yoghurt can make a healthy dessert or for an alternative breakfast add some muesli for a carbohydrate boost on the day of training or competition.



Don't overcook broccoli/kale/ cabbage/green vegetables as they will lose their colour, texture and taste. Keeping the bite in will make them more appetising.

If you don't like boiled or steamed vegetables try cutting up raw vegetables (such as broccoli florets, red and green peppers, carrots, mange tout) and serve with a healthy dip such as natural yoghurt with chives/ a squeeze of lemon or lime to encourage them to fill up with goodness.



VITAMIN E

Vitamin E is widely distributed in plant and animal foods therefore it is very easy to achieve adequate intake to aid immune function. Plant sources include healthy nuts, oils and seeds.

For example:

Sunflower, corn and palm oil can be used in moderate amounts whilst cooking and baking instead of lard/butter to increase vitamin E content.

Products made from these oils such as polyunsaturated margarine, mayonnaise and salad dressings will also contain vitamin E and should feature in the diet.

Almonds, hazelnuts, peanuts (non salted) and sunflower seeds are examples of vitamin E rich snacks and can be eaten during the day.

Meat, poultry and fish contain small amounts of vitamin E, however plant sources make a bigger contribution in the diet.



Fruit smoothies made with lots of fruit, added milk and natural yoghurt are a great way to cram in all the goodness of fruit and are usually a hit.



KEY TAKE HOME MESSAGES



1

Make sure you are eating carbohydrate throughout the day with every meal from a variety of sources and before and soon after a training session/match. This will help fuel performance and aid recovery to get you ready for the next session!



2

Ensure you are consuming enough protein within your diet, particularly after a tough workout, to maximise your muscle recovery and growth to become better, faster and stronger!



3

Eat a rainbow. Choose a variety of fruit and vegetables of different colours to ensure you meet your antioxidant needs to stay fit and healthy.



4

Eat breakfast every day. This will kickstart your day and give your body fuel after a good night's rest.



5

Stay hydrated. Always carry a bottle of water with you and especially, to training and matches.



6

Choose lean (low fat) protein sources & sauces to help reduce fat intake to keep total caloric intake under control.



7

Get a regular sleep routine. Sleep between 7-9 hours every night, especially after training sessions and matches, this will help improve recovery and get you ready for the day ahead.



8

Be prepared. Prepare your meals, snacks and drinks ahead of time so you know you will be fuelled and ready to perform at your best and recover optimally afterward.



9

If following a vegan/vegetarian regime, ensure you are hitting protein targets and monitoring your iron, vitamin & mineral intake.



10

Be consistent. A bulletproof nutrition strategy and plan takes time to perfect.



11

Branch out. Don't be afraid to chop and change your food choices to keep it fresh and exciting. Try new things!

If you have any further questions regarding any of the information covered here, please consult your sports nutritionist, Dr Andrea McNeilly/Mr Daniel McIlrath (Graduate Sport and Exercise Nutritionist) and they will be happy to answer any questions which you may have. Contact details: a.mcneilly@ulster.ac.uk daniel.mcilrath@icloud.com

SAUCES

WHITE SAUCE

Makes 250mls



Basic low fat white sauce (to be used sparingly with meals) can also be used to make a healthy lasagne

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons plain flour
1 tablespoon cornflour
1 tsp black pepper
250mls skimmed milk

Method:

Place the plain flour in a small saucepan over medium heat and cook until slightly roasted but not brown, stirring continuously.

Add the cornflour, pepper and milk and milk stirring constantly.

Continue cooking and stirring until thickened, about 10 minutes.

Use on its own or as a base for gravy (see next recipes)

Provides: 43 kcal, 0.14 g fat, 0.07 g saturated fat, 2.48g protein, 7.77g CHO, of which sugars 4.6g.

GRAVY

Makes 375 mls



Low- fat gravy (to be used sparingly with meals)

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
2 tbsp dried onion soup mix – or fresh chopped onion (dried onion soup mix may be harder to find)
¼ tsp dried thyme
¼ tsp garlic powder
250 mls low fat white sauce (see above)
skimmed milk (if needed) to thin down

2 tbsp dried onion soup mix - or fresh chopped onion (dried onion soup mix may be harder to find)

Method:

In a saucepan combine the Worcestershire sauce, soup mix, thyme, garlic powder and white sauce.

Place over low heat and heat until the soup mix is well dissolved and onions are limp, just a few minutes.

If sauce becomes too thick, add a little skimmed milk, and thin to desired consistency. Serve hot.

Provides: 43 kcals, 0.32g fat, 0.10 gm saturated fat, 2.24g protein, carbohydrate 7.93g of which sugars 4.9g.

BOLOGNAISE SAUCE



Basic spaghetti bolognese sauce

Ingredients:

1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 onion finely chopped
1 garlic clove minced
1 400g tinned chopped tomatoes
1 tsp sugar
Bunch of fresh basil/ 1 tsp dried basil
1 tsp oregano
Small amount of salt and pepper to taste
1 dessertspoon tomato paste

Method:

Heat the oil gently and cook chopped onion for 5 minutes until slightly translucent, add garlic and cook for another 3 minutes, add the rest of ingredients, reduce heat and cook for a further 12-15 minutes until the sauce thickens up. This sauce freezes well so can be made in advance.

*Once the sauce is made add cooked lean steak mince, mushrooms, courgettes, aubergine, grated carrot to this to bulk up the goodness and make a winning evening meal!

Provides: Kcal: 280, carbohydrate: 31g, sugar: 20g, protein: 7g, fat: 15g, saturated fat: 2g

SMOOTHIES

PROTEIN SMOOTHIE (serves 1)



High Protein Smoothie (great for post exercise snack) especially if your main meal is not going to be available within 1-2 hours)

Ingredients

100g low fat yoghurt
30g oats (or 1 sachet pre-packaged oats)
100ml semi-skimmed milk
30g/1 tbsp peanut butter
Banana/berries/fruit of choice

Method

Blend all ingredients together

Provides: 480kcal; 64g carbohydrate, of which sugars 19g, 25.5g protein; 19.8g fat; 5.3g saturated fat.

QUICK LUNCHES

Great for the 3-4 hours before training.

Some of these can even be eaten cold after a match if travelling back home from competition (just be sure to keep them in a cool bag/fridge)

COUNTRY VEGETABLE SOUP WITH CHEESE TOAST

Serves 1



300g pot fresh vegetable soup (fresh, chilled, vegetable-based soup-look for less than 40 calories per 100ml on the label)

Ingredients:

2 sliced wholemeal bread
50g hard cheese, sliced
Dash of Tabasco
1 tomato, sliced
Freshly ground black pepper

Method:

Heat the soup according to the instructions on the label.

Meanwhile, toast the bread, add the cheese slices and sprinkle with Tabasco. Top with the tomato slices, sprinkle with black pepper and grill until the cheese melts.

Enjoy with a small glass of orange juice (150ml)

Provides: 458kcal; 67.10g carbohydrate of which sugars 15g; protein 24.25g; fat 10.99g; saturated fat: 3.31g

CHICKEN/ TUNA PASTA SALAD

(serves 1)



Ingredients

1 cup/100g dried wholemeal or white pasta
1 can of tuna in water (drained) OR 1 chicken breast (approximately 120g)
3 tbsp sweetcorn (around 80g)
1 tbsp low fat mayonnaise
1 tbsps low fat cheddar cheese

Method

Boil pasta for 20 mins

If using chicken, bake in oven ~20-25 mins at 180 degrees celcius

Mix tuna OR chicken breast (baked) with sweetcorn, low-fat mayonnaise and low-fat cheddar cheese

Add cooked pasta to above mixture

Provides: 480kcal; 70g carbohydrate of which sugars 7g; 25.5g protein; 19.8g fat; 7.4g saturated fat.

MIXED BEAN TOMATO PASTA

(serves 2)



Ingredients

1 cup/100g dried wholemeal pasta
1 can chopped tomatoes
1 tbsp chilli powder
1 can mixed beans (drained and rinsed)
60g reduced-fat cheddar cheese
2 large handfuls spinach
1 onion
1 tbsp oil

Method

Boil pasta for ~20 mins

Fry onion in oil until soft

Add tomatoes, sweetcorn, mixed beans and spinach to pan for ~5-10 mins

Once pasta cooked, take pan off heat and mix together with above ingredients

Portion out and top with grated cheese

*(can be eaten hot or cold)

Provides: 720kcal; 63g carbs of which sugars 7g, 38.5g protein; 17.2g fat; 4.4g sat. fat. *can add cooked chicken breast for 35g extra protein

CARROT AND RED LENTIL SOUP

(serves 5)



Ingredients

1 tbsp sunflower oil
2 onions finely chopped
1.5 cups dried red lentils
6 carrots chopped
1 stock cube made as per packet instructions
2 tsp cumin and 1 tbsp chilli flakes

Method:

Dry fry cumin and chilli in a pan until start to sizzle

Add oil, onion, carrots, lentils and stock to pan and bring to the boil

Reduce heat and simmer for ~15 mins until lentils have softened

Blend to smooth consistency and service with wholemeal bread/ sandwich of your choice

Provides: 300kcal; 30g carbohydrate of which sugars 12.5g, 15g protein; 7g fat; 1.1g sat. fat.

QUICK LUNCHES

SPICY ROASTED CHICKPEAS

(serves 3)



Ingredients

1 can chickpeas rinsed and drained
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp chilli powder
½ tsp cumin
1 tsp rapeseed/sunflower oil

Method:

Empty chickpeas out of can and pat dry with kitchen roll

Mix all ingredients in a bowl then spread on baking tray

Roast for ~35-40 mins at 180 degrees C

Provides: 105kcal; 12g carbohydrates of which sugars 5g; 5.8g protein; 4.7g fat; 0.45g sat. fat

CHICKEN, AVOCADO, WALNUT AND WATERCRESS SALAD IN GRANARY BREAD

(Serves 2)



Ingredients

1 ripe avocado mashed.
Juice of ½ a lemon
Freshly ground black pepper
4 slices of granary bread
1 cooked chicken breast, sliced
1 bag watercress, washed and torn up so the stalks aren't too long.
About 12 walnuts, toasted for 7-8 minutes in a low oven
(see nutty Chicken Pitta pockets,)

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Method:

Peel and mash the avocado in a small bowl, combining with the lemon juice immediately to prevent it discolouring. Add a generous grinding of black pepper then spread the bread with this mixture.

Layer the chicken slices, watercress and walnuts onto the bread, sandwich together and serve with some extra watercress on the side.

Provides: 343Kcal; 30.60g Carbohydrate of which sugars 2.33g; protein 22.20g; fat 16.55g; saturated fat 2.51g

BBQ BAKED BEANS

(serves 1)



Ingredients

½ can baked beans
2 tsp BBQ seasoning

Method

Microwave beans and add 2tsp. seasoning and stir

Serve with wholemeal/ seeded toast and poached egg or have with baked potato and reduced fat cheese

Provides: 170kcal; 29g carbohydrate of which sugars 10g; 10.5g protein; 1.1g fat; 0.15g sat. fat (not including additions, e.g. toast/ egg/ cheese/ potato)

CHEESY SCRAMBLED EGGS

(serves 1)



Ingredients

2 large eggs
1 tsp low fat spread
Glug/30 mls semi skimmed milk
30g reduced fat cheddar cheese
Sprinkle pepper

Method:

Whisk eggs in a jug

Add milk, spread and pepper

Microwave for 30 seconds- 1minute, remove from microwave and stir

Add cheese then return to microwave for ~30 seconds

Provides: 270kcal; 1.4g carbs (sugar), 26.2g protein; 18.2g fat; 6.8g saturated fat
*When served with 2 slices wholemeal toast and ½ can baked beans provides: 650kcal; 66g carbs, 17g sugar; 46gprotein; 21.3g fat; 7.4g sat. fat.

DINNERS

CHILLI CON CARNE WITH RICE

(serves 2)



Ingredients

2 cloves garlic chopped
1 medium onion chopped
500g extra lean mince
1 can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 large peppers chopped
1 can chopped tomatoes
Stock cube made as instructions
Tbsp cumin
Tbsp chilli powder
Packet basmati/ wholegrain rice/ baked potato
30g Feta cheese/ reduced fat cheddar cheese

Method

Dry fry mince until brown
Add chopped onion, garlic and peppers to pan for ~5 mins
Add in chopped tomatoes, stock and kidney beans
Sprinkle cumin and chilli powder
Simmer for ~20 mins
Serve with basmati/ wholegrain rice or large baked potato
Sprinkle feta cheese on top

Provides: 960kcal; 110g CHO of which sugars 18g, 88g protein; 23g fat; 9g sat. fat

HOMEMADE WEDGES

(serves 1)



Ingredients

1 tbsp sunflower oil
1 large or 2 medium sized potatoes
Salt/pepper (or seasoning of your choice, e.g. Cajun/ chilli/ garlic)

Method

Cut potatoes into wedge size
Microwave in a bowl with 2tbsp. water for ~3 minutes
Remove from microwave and brush lightly with oil
Place on tray with seasoning sprinkled over and bake in oven ~200 degrees C for ~25mins

Provides: 260kcal; 44g carbs of which sugars: 2g, 5g protein; 6.8g fat; 0.5g sat. fat.

MICROWAVE CURRY EGG "FRIED" RICE

(serves 1)



Ingredients

1 packet of microwaveable basmati/wholegrain rice
2 heaped tbsp frozen vegetables (e.g. peas and carrots)
2 eggs
½ packet schwartz curry sauce for chips packet or other curry sauce

Method

Whisk eggs in large mug with a glug of milk
Microwave frozen vegetables as per packet instructions
Microwave rice
Make sauce mix as per instructions (with water)
Mix all heated ingredients in a large bowl and blast for further 30 seconds in microwave

Provides: 600kcal; 73g carbohydrates of which sugars: 10g, 30g protein; 20g fat; 5.5g sat. fat

LOW CAL CHEESEBURGER & CHIPS



Ingredients:

175g 5% fat mince
20g reduced fat cheese
200g hand cut chips
55g wholemeal bun
15g ketchup
Slice of Lettuce & tomato
5ml Olive oil

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 180
Boil hand cut chips for 5 minutes
Add olive oil to baked tray and oven roast the chips for 20 mins
Preheat pan, meanwhile make burger patty from mince using your hands.
Add patty to medium heat and cook for 4-6 per side
Assemble burger using bun, tomato, lettuce, cheese and ketchup. Add chips to plate

Provides: Kcal: 651, 65g carbohydrate of which sugars 7g, 55g protein, 19g fat

DINNERS

CHEESY GREEN PESTO PASTA



Ingredients:

75g uncooked pasta
30g reduced fat green pesto
40g reduced fat cheddar cheese
Portion of red onion, red pepper, garlic & spinach

Method:

Add pasta to boiling water for 6-8 minutes
Add vegetable mix and pesto to a pan on low heat with a small amount of olive oil spray.
Drain pasta and add to the low heat pan with the pesto and vegetable mix. Stir for 2 minutes.
Add to bowl, and top with cheddar cheese.

Kcal: 544, 73g carbohydrates of which sugars 12g, 24g protein, 17g fat

MEAT FEAST TORTILLA PIZZA



Ingredients

Large tortilla wrap
Sauce - Tomato puree, splash of water, oregano, salt and pepper
Toppings – onion, mixed bell peppers, sweetcorn
40g reduced fat cheddar cheese
75g chicken
20g pepperoni
25g parma ham

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 180 degrees
Mix sauce ingredients together in a small bowl and spread evenly across the tortilla
Add cheese and other toppings
Place in oven for 6-8 minutes

Provides: Kcal: 562, carbohydrate: 44g (to increase carbohydrate, swap some of the meat for more veg or use a thicker base), of which sugars 10g, protein: 47g, fat: 22g

HEALTHY FRY UP



Ingredients:

2 bacon medallions
1 turkey/chicken sausage
1 poached/boiled egg
Handful of spinach
Half tomato
2 thick slice wholemeal bread
20g low fat butter spread
200ml orange juice

Instructions:

Bring a saucepan of water to a boil, then add egg (either to poach or to boil the egg), leave for 2-5 minutes depending on how you like your egg.
Meanwhile, heat a pan to medium heat with a spray of olive oil. Add bacon medallions and sausages for around 5 minutes, flip as necessary until thoroughly cooked
Add bread to toaster
Assemble plate, pour orange juice and enjoy!

Provides: Kcal: 592, carbohydrate: 74g, of which sugars 24g, protein: 43g, fat: 15g

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