

Nutrition

Fuel and Fluids for Soccer

Successful soccer players must have great skill, endurance, power, speed, agility, flexibility, and mental alertness. Nutrition is a key factor both in providing energy for soccer, thus optimizing performance, and in minimizing injuries caused by fatigue. The heightened energy demands of the sport can drain you of fuel and fluid, thus compromising your physical and mental performance and putting you at risk of heat illness. A good nutritional plan provides sufficient fluid and energy (mostly as carbohydrate) to power you throughout the match and to minimize dehydration.

Total Energy Intake

Consume 45-60 kcal per kg body weight per day (20-27 kcal/lb). A player who weighs 70 kg (154 lb) should consume approximately 3100-4200 kcal/day.

Carbohydrate And Fluid Intake During Routine Daily Training

Consume 8-10 g of carbohydrate per kg body weight per day (3.5-4.5 g/lb) or roughly 60%-70% of total calories. An athlete who weighs 70 kg (154 lb) should eat about 560-700 g of carbohydrate every day.

Drink enough fluids every day so that your body weight remains constant at the start of each training session. If your urine color is not clear, it is likely that you are becoming dehydrated.

The Pre-Game Meal

Eat 3-4 hours before the match begins; 60%-70% of meal calories should be from carbohydrates; foods should be customary and easy to digest.

Avoid high-fat and fried foods, which are not easily digested and may cause gastrointestinal discomfort.

Avoid high-fiber foods because they may cause abdominal cramping and gas.

Avoid solid foods immediately before or during the game; they are digested too slowly during exercise.

If you are extremely nervous before a game or recovering from an illness, consider liquid meals.

Consider liquid meals when travel time to a game is short.

Drink 16-32 oz of a fluid-replacement sports drink 2 hours before the game plus another 8-16 oz 15-20 minutes before the event to top off the fluid reservoirs.

Avoid the dehydrating effects of caffeine or alcohol for 72 hours before a game.

Nutrition During The Game

Consume a fluid-replacement sports drink that contains carbohydrates and electrolytes at every stoppage in play. Plain water provides necessary fluid, but it reduces overall fluid intake and does not supply needed carbohydrates.

Remind your teammates to drink whenever possible during the game, even though they may not be thirsty. Place your individual bottles containing a cold sports drink at the sidelines so it will be more convenient to drink during stoppages of play.

At half-time, try to drink enough fluids to replenish all of the body weight you have lost during the first period of play. Fluids exit the stomach much faster than do solids, so sports drinks are preferable to solid foods during the half-time break.

After The Game

During recovery from strenuous soccer play, you should strive to replace your body's reserves of carbohydrate (glycogen), water and electrolytes, especially sodium.