

CRCA - NUTRITION

Training Nutrition

It is well accepted that fluids and nutrition play a vital role in cricket performance, and that a player's requirements are different to that of non Cricket players. Optimizing fluid intake and nutrition leads to better health and higher standards of performance.

Elite cricketers can have a busy training schedule with multiple sessions throughout the day. The intensity of sessions can range from low to very high. Cricketers need to base their intake on nutrient- dense foods such as cereals, fruit, vegetables, low fat dairy products and lean meat or vegetarian alternatives. Ideally, meals consumed during a cricket match should provide carbohydrate to keep blood glucose levels topped up, provide a variety of other nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals, and be low in fat and easy to digest. Good examples include, sandwiches and rolls with lean meat, low fat cheese and salad, home made pizza, pasta dishes, fruit salad, low fat muffins, yoghurt and fruit.

Food intake needs to be well-timed to help with recovery between sessions. Intake may need to be adjusted to match the activity level of each day with extra snacks being included on heavier days. Be clear about individual nutritional goals and take eating and drinking strategies as seriously as net practice.

Fluids for performance

Losing fluid during training and playing is the body's way of controlling temperature and should be treated as a positive outcome. However, failure to replace the fluid is a major problem as excessive losses of fluid reduce your endurance capacity, power, reaction time and concentration. Drink breaks are generally scheduled every hour. Combating dehydration is an important issue, and cricketers should drink at least 250-500 ml of fluid at each drink break to replace sweat losses on hot days. For active players such as batsmen, bowlers and the wicket-keeper fluids need to be kept up in order to counteract the inevitable fluid loss during the game or training.

Fuel for performance

To meet the demands of training and competing, players require food that can be broken down into usable energy. Carbohydrates are the most appropriate sources of fuel for Cricket players, and they should form the bulk of calorific intake. Foods such as rice, pasta, potatoes, and bread are rich in carbohydrates and are broken down into glycogen (which produces energy) and distributed throughout the body to be used when exercising. Intensive training and competing can place heavy demands on glycogen stores. As these stores are depleted, fatigue occurs and performance drops.

Too nervous to eat?

Some players find it difficult to eat normally before a game. These players should focus on foods that they enjoy and perhaps a larger breakfast if they know that closer to the game they will struggle to eat. Eating nothing due to 'nerves' before batting or 'feeling heavy' in anticipation of bowling is not a sensible option, but a smaller helping of food could be supplemented with carbohydrate containing fluids like fruit smoothies, low fat milk drinks and fruit juice.

Build and Repair

Due to the intensity and duration of Cricket (particularly batting and bowling), players require a higher intake of protein. Cricket players require a greater intake of protein than sedentary people do because protein helps build and repair muscle. Protein is also an energy source, although that is not its primary role. It can be burned as a backup fuel to produce energy when glycogen levels are in short supply.

The Glycaemic Index

Considering the influence of different types of carbohydrate foods is fundamental in a Nutrition Plan. Coaches and players are now recognising the importance of the Glycaemic Index. The Glycaemic Index provides a guideline for measuring the speed of energy release into the blood stream. Certain foods are rated with a high glycaemic index while others are low, and most fall in between.

The different types of carbohydrates vary in their rates of absorption, digestion, and influence on blood sugar levels. A food's glycemic index (GI) is used to describe the rate at which the food raises blood glucose levels. High-GI foods, such as white bread and honey, rapidly increase blood sugar and trigger the production of large amounts of insulin to counteract the rise. Low-GI carbohydrates, such as apples, porridge, oats, and lentils, have a slower rate of sugar absorption and therefore produce less insulin. **Low-GI-carbohydrate-rich foods are more appropriate sources of energy for fuelling training and competition, and they reduce the likelihood of carbohydrate intake increasing body fat amounts.**

Guidelines for Fat Intake

Avoid saturated fats, such as visible fat on meat. Diets high in saturated fats and trans fats increase low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol levels and, therefore, the risk of heart disease, whereas most unsaturated fats have harmless or even helpful effects on one's lipid profile.

- Eat fish two or three times a week to boost your intake of essential fish oils.
- Use olive oil for cooking and in salad dressings.
- Avoid eating fatty foods prior to and following exercise.

Drawing Stumps

After play has ended for the day, it is important that players start to refuel and rehydrate almost immediately, especially if they are playing again within 24 hours. Sometimes it is hard to eat a big meal straight after exercise. In multi-day games, recovery is a primary concern. At the end of the day, players need to replace fluid and carbohydrate. For active players, a carbohydrate-based meal or snack such as sandwiches, fruit, yoghurt, milk drinks or cereal bars should be consumed in conjunction with fluids such as water, juice, cordial or sports drink within an hour of the end of the match.

Aim to eat a high carbohydrate snack within 1 hour of coming off the pitch bananas, iced fingers, cereal bars, isotonic sports drink, sandwiches. This is the best time to start to get energy back into the muscles for the next day. It should be followed by a full evening meal within two hours of finishing play. This meal should be high in carbohydrate, choose plenty of bread, potatoes, pasta or rice topped up with a moderate amount of meat, chicken, fish or pulses, maybe in a low fat sauce with vegetables and perhaps fruit as well.

Cricket Nutrition Guidelines

After a hard training session or match; fruits, sandwiches, and protein shakes start the refuelling process

Review your protein intake - you probably need a bit more if you are training hard and playing regularly
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Emphasize low-GI, carbohydrate-rich foods rather than high-GI foods in your normal diet.
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Eat high-GI foods-bananas, sports drinks, pasta, for example-immediately after exercising

Eat fewer refined and simple carbohydrates, such as white bread and sugar.
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Eat smaller meals and eat more often to encourage stable energy and blood sugar levels.

Eat as much variety as possible - instead of focusing on wheat based products (such as cereals, breads and snack bars), try rye bread, oats or quinoa flakes instead
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Eat complex carbohydrates three hours before a competition or hard training session.
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A meal containing a protein source and a combination of carbohydrates should be eaten within an hour of finishing a game or training session
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Remember to keep up fluid intake
