

Example nutrition plan

It is well accepted that nutrition plays a vital role in rugby performance, and that a player's requirements are different to that of non rugby players. A nutrition plan does more than just optimise energy levels for training and competition.

Similar to weight training or speed training, a nutrition plan is based upon aims and objectives and manipulated for specific outcomes. Areas to consider in your Nutrition Plan include:

1. Energise

Carbohydrate is the most readily available source of energy for rugby players, and should form the bulk of your calorie intake.

Guidelines for pre-match meals include:

- eat a main meal at least 3 hours prior to kick-off, focusing on carbohydrate rich foods with a small protein source
- a small snack such as an apple 1 ½ hours before kick-off
- avoid very high protein and fat intakes
- drink plenty of fluid
- experiment with foods during training to find what suits you best

Focus on foods with a medium glycaemic index prior to training and games e.g. porridge, and high glycaemic foods immediately post match e.g. bananas, honey sandwich.

2. Build and Repair

Due to the contact nature of rugby and the high strength and power requirements, players require a higher intake of protein compared to non-players. Muscle mass increases rely on a moderate level of protein intake but also require energy from other nutrients (fat and carbohydrates) to facilitate a positive energy balance.

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. An energy shake may be a worthwhile option for such players.

3. Replenish

Within 30-40 minutes after the match you should replenish carbohydrate, fluid and electrolyte losses (see examples of recovery snacks below). A small amount of protein also needs to be included.

Examples of post-exercise recovery snacks

Choose 1-2 options from following list. Each of these post-exercise 'recovery' snacks provides approximately 50g of carbohydrate and over 10g of protein:

- 250-350ml carbohydrate energy drink + 250ml liquid meal supplement
- 200-300ml fruit smoothie/milkshake
- 250ml low fat fruit yoghurt or 1 drinking yoghurt (350ml)
- 200ml (1 cup) drinking yoghurt + a low fat energy bar
- a sandwich with low fat cheese/cottage cheese/lean cold meat/chicken + 1 piece of fruit
- a bowl of cereal with low fat/fat-free milk
- 2 small packets of pretzels + 250ml low fat yoghurt.