

Hydration and good nutrition for performance

By OHL Dietitian Michelle Taylor

We all want to play at our best. Good nutrition is vital to ensuring you get the most from your body. In addition to food, drinking enough fluid to keep well hydrated plays an important role in optimising performance and general wellbeing.

How do I tell whether I am hydrated?

Every person is different when it comes to fluid needs. Sweat rates can vary from one individual to another and we have different fluid requirements at different ages in our lives. As a general rule of thumb if your urine is a pale yellow colour then you are well hydrated. Also worth noting is over drinking can also be problematic and cause stomach upset and in severe cases it can be dangerous to your health.

Pre-game

It is important to be hydrated before game day to maximise your performance. Don't wait until the day of the tournament to hydrate – if you start the day dehydrated the body will take a while to rehydrate and this may affect your performance. Ensuring you drink plenty of fluids leading up to game day will put you in great shape. Water is generally your best choice for good hydration pre game. On the night before a game, make sure you have a healthy meal containing some protein and carbohydrates (Pasta bolognaise, meat with potato and vegetables, rice with chicken and vegetables) to provide your body with fuel it needs.

Game day

Breakfast is important to top up your fuel stores. Choose foods containing carbohydrates and protein such as cereal and milk, toast with peanut butter and glass of milk. During a game, make the most of bench time, half time, time outs, and warm up to take a drink from your water bottle. Sipping water is the best way to hydrate, rather than drinking large amounts in one go. Don't forget on tournament day to keep up your fluid in between games. To keep your fuel stores up in between games choose lighter, easy to digest meals based on carbohydrates such as jam or honey sandwich, dried fruit, muesli bars, fruit or a smoothie based on milk.

Post-game

After the game it is important to continue to drink water or have some milk plus include some snacks or a meal containing protein and carbohydrate. No need for specialty foods. All hydration and nutrition needs for pre, during and post games can generally be met through regular foods and drinks.

What about sports drinks?

Sports drinks contain electrolytes that help absorb fluid into the body more readily and carbohydrates for energy. For some, during prolonged activity, such as a busy tournament or in intense heat when summer temperatures can heat up some of the stadiums a sports drink may be helpful in providing a quick way to replenish lost fluids through sweat. They are not recommended as a drink outside of sport times as they are a high source of refined carbohydrates and not a great choice for teeth or our health in general. Outside of sport we get electrolytes and quality carbohydrates from a healthy balanced diet.

