



Nutrition for Soccer

by Neil Bradford, Director of Coaching

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Soccer is a player's game which consists of two forty-five minute halves, with a short interval between halves. The game of soccer is characterized as a high intensity intermittent exercise that utilizes both the aerobic and energy system.

The individual soccer player tends to have qualities that include highly skilled feet, strong physique and is very fast and agile. Players can vary widely in body size and stature however, most tend to be well muscled with a low body fat level to maximize speed and agility.

Nutrition is a key ingredient in the preparation for the athlete to perform at the peak of his/her powers on game day. It is therefore necessary to eat correctly and take care of your body during the day, week and the season. This in turns allows you the best opportunity to perform to your maximum potential.

In the following pages are tables showing food and drinks that an athlete should or should not be eating prior to competition and after competition. Pre-event nutrition can have a major impact on game day performance. Player's diet should therefore be high in carbohydrates and low in fat. The target for this is 60-70% carbohydrates and 10-15% proteins. We will begin looking at the meal the night before competition. This meal is important as it can have dramatic effect on performance the next day. Reasons offered for this is that energy reserves are made up from previous day's meal, not as many people think from the breakfast or meal on the day of competition.

These are only suggestions but for further ideas, please contact your nutritional specialist at the local doctor. Meals such as breakfast and lunch (in the tables following) should be eaten three hours before competition to allow food to be digested.

Recommended Drinks	Recommended Foods	Recommended Desserts/Snacks
Orange Juice	Potatoes	Fruit
Apple Juice	Lean Meats	Pretzels
Water	Spaghetti	Cheese & Crackers
Fruit Juice	Tomato Sauce w/Meat	Popcom
Vegetable Juice	Rice steam or boiled	Plain Biscuits
Milk	Fish	
	Salad	
	Vegetables	
	Pizza	
	Bread	



Breakfast - The Day of Competition

On competition day the breakfast can often be the pre-game meal. This offers very little to the athlete in terms of the energy production system. However, if the wrong foods are consumed it can cause much damage to performance later in the day.

Drinks	Foods	Snacks
Orange Juice	Bagels	Fruit
Apple Juice	Raisin Bran	Pretzels
Water	Toast	Cheese & Crackers
Fruit Juice	Yogurt	Popcom
Vegetable Juice	Pancakes	Plain Biscuits
Milk	Bread	

Lunch

In a tournament, you can often play two games in a day; lunch therefore becomes a key factor on how you play in the afternoon's game. The meal

will have very little effect on the energy production systems but as stated earlier can have an adverse effect if the wrong foods are consumed.

It has been suggested for the player to perform to their maximum potential, the player needs to enter the field of play with an empty stomach. The thought process for this is that when there is food in the stomach, the heart has to pump large volumes of blood to the stomach to aid digestion. This effects performance in that when the game begins the heart re-directs the blood to the working muscles, therefore preventing the digestive process. This can result in stomach cramps and gas, making the player feel uncomfortable on the field of play affecting the player both physically and psychologically.

Drinks	Foods	Snacks
Orange Juice	Bread	Fruit
Apple Juice	Sandwich - Meat, Fish, or Poultry	Banana
Water	Soup	Cheese & Crackers
Vegetable Juice	Bagels	Pretzels
Milk/Milkshake	Vegetables	Small Bar of Chocolate



Pre Game Snacks

The Goals

- An empty stomach and gastrointestinal tract, but enough fuel for the muscles and enough food to prevent hunger.
- A settled stomach and a confident athlete
- A well hydrated and a comfortable athlete

Why?

- This enables the blood to go to the working muscles not the digestive organs
- Muscles rely primarily on fuel stored from meals eaten in the day to day before competition
- Food eaten on game day fuels the brain and keeps muscles topped up when the competition is long or intermittent
- This helps in keeping pre-competition nerves from upsetting the stomach

Drinks	Snacks
Orange Juice	Fruit
Sports Drinks	Fruit Bars
Water	Raisins
Fruit Juice	Apples
	Banana
	Small Bar of Chocolate

3 hours Before the Game

- Sandwich with meat, fish or poultry
- Potato or Rice
- Cereal, Fruit, Yogurt or Toast

2 hours Before the Game

- High Carbohydrates, Low Fat, Moderate Protein
- Cereal, Banana, Milk
- Plain Muffin and Fruit Juice
- Toast with Jam and Milk

1 hour Before the Game

- High Carbohydrates, Low Fat, Moderate Protein
- Milk and a medium Banana
- Plain Muffin and Fruit Juice
- Toast with Jam and Milk
- Small bar of Chocolate

These are just samples and ideas on how to improve performance during sporting competition. There are many ideas and it is through trial and error that you will find out what works best for you. Good luck with your soccer. If you need further assistance contact coaching@saysoccer.org.