

EAT 2 COMPETE



Carbohydrate Connection

Carbohydrate is one of the nutrients found in food and it is a major fuel or energy provider in everyday diets. It also plays an important role in exercise - it is the major fuel to allow the muscles to work hard.

Carbohydrates are chains of glucose or sugar units. Some carbohydrate in food is made up of short chains of sugar units, and are recognised as sugary foods such as jams, sweets, chocolate and soft drinks, where other carbohydrates are made up of long complicated chains of sugars and are called starches eg bread, potatoes, cereals and pasta.

All carbohydrates are broken down by digestion into sugar and are then absorbed into the blood. Carbohydrate is then stored in the muscles and liver as glycogen. Muscle glycogen is a major fuel provider for that muscle to work during exercise, especially when training or playing hard.

The body has a limited amount of space to store glycogen, and it can be used up quickly during long training sessions. Running out of glycogen during training can mean that you will feel tired, and that will affect your performance. So it is very important to refill your stores regularly, to make sure you have enough fuel to allow you

to work hard in the next session. The way you do this is to include carbohydrate-rich foods at each meal, and to pay particular attention to recovery.

How to make sure you have a good carbohydrate intake:

- Focus your meals on starchy carbohydrate foods like potatoes, bread, pasta, rice, noodles and breakfast cereals
- Take a high carbohydrate snack between meals
- Use thick slices of bread
- Include potatoes - boiled, mashed or baked - more regularly than chips
- Add fruit to your breakfast cereal
- Make up your own high carb smoothie - add fresh, tinned or frozen fruit to some yogurt, and add some honey

Get the timing right...

One of the aims when you go to training or a match is to be well fuelled up. This means you should eat something about 1 to 3 hours before your session - and this should contain carbohydrate to top up your glycogen stores. How much you eat will depend on when you eat it - look at the boxes overleaf for some ideas.



www.irishrugby.ie

EAT 2 COMPETE



Pre-exercise meals - 2 to 3 hours before training, taken with a drink

- ✓ Pasta with tomato-based sauce with meat, fish or beans
- ✓ Baked potato with cheese, tuna or baked beans
- ✓ Sandwich or roll filled with chicken, egg, tuna or peanut butter
- ✓ Rice or noodles with chicken or lentils
- ✓ Meat, vegetables and potatoes



Pre-exercise snacks - 1 to 2 hours before training, taken with a drink

- ✓ Yogurt and fresh fruit
- ✓ Pancakes and syrup or jam
- ✓ Jam sandwich
- ✓ Cereal bar
- ✓ Breakfast cereal with milk or yoghurt and banana
- ✓ Fruit and a glass of milk
- ✓ Soup and bread

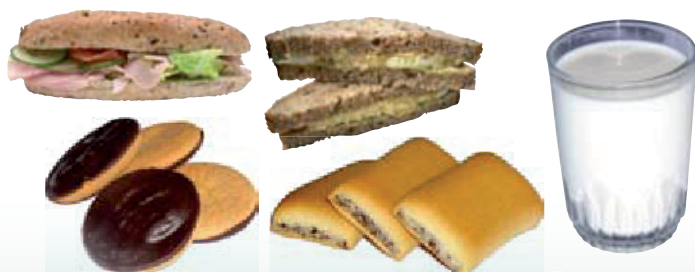


Refuel to Recover...

After hard training sessions or matches, your glycogen stores will be low. They need to be refilled to be ready for your next session...which is probably not too long away. Your muscles are like sponges in the first hour after hard exercise and they can soak up carbohydrate quicker at this time, which speeds up recovery. The amount you need will depend on your weight and how long and hard the session was. Here are a few ideas to keep you going:

Recovery Snacks - taken with a drink

- ✓ Fresh fruit - bananas, apples, grapes
- ✓ Fruit yogurt or yogurt drink
- ✓ Bread or roll with chicken or ham
- ✓ Pancakes
- ✓ Tub of custard or rice
- ✓ Fruit loaf
- ✓ Biscuits - digestives, jaffa cakes, fig rolls
- ✓ Cereal bars



www.irishrugby.ie

EAT 2 COMPETE



Recovery meals - taken with a drink

- ✓ Baked beans on toast
- ✓ Baked potatoes with meat or cheese
- ✓ Pizza
- ✓ Pasta or rice with meat or cheese and tomato-based sauce
- ✓ Meat or fish, vegetables and potatoes
- ✓ Desserts such as fruit crumble, yogurts, ice cream and custards



www.irishrugby.ie