

## FACT SHEET

# FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT - BASKETBALL

## ABOUT BASKETBALL

Basketball is played by teams of 10-12 players, with five players on court at any one time. A basketball match is comprised of four quarters of 10-12 minutes each, with a break of 10-15 minutes at half time. With many stoppages throughout the game, players will often be on-court upwards of 60 minutes. Games can be played on both indoor and outdoor courts.

Basketball is a fast-paced game characterised by jumping (to contest possession), and repeated short fast sprints and varying periods of recovery. Therefore, basketball players will utilise both aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. Players are also required to think tactically and display good technical ball skills for the duration of the game. Depending on the level of the athlete, players will train anywhere from one session per week to one or two sessions per day. The most noticeable physical characteristic of basketball players is their height and muscularity, but they also tend to also be lean for speed and agility on the court.

## TRAINING DIET

A general healthy eating pattern is essential for a fit and lean basketball player. Diets should be based around nutritious carbohydrates, lean protein sources as well as fruits and vegetables. Individual requirements will be determined by frequency of training, size of athlete and adjustment for growth in younger athletes and should be discussed with an Accredited Sports Dietitian.

## FLUID NEEDS

In order to stay hydrated, fluids should be consumed before, during and after training and matches. However, body fluid losses will vary depending on training and competition times and venues. If playing on an indoor air-conditioned court, players may find that they don't sweat as much as if they are playing on a poorly ventilated court, or outdoors in the summer heat. Hot playing conditions will result in noticeably high body fluid losses; however, players should also be aware that they can still lose significant amounts of body fluids when playing in air-conditioned venues. Rather than relying on perceived sweat rate or thirst to determine fluid needs, a more reliable method of assessing your body fluid losses is a weigh-in before and after the game/training. For each kilogram of body weight lost, encourage players to drink ~1.5L of fluid – this can be either in the form of water or sports drink. Remember that basketball is not only a game of high-intensity running, but it is also a sport that requires concentration, fast decision-making and ball-handling skills. These skills (especially

the latter three) are affected by dehydration and low blood glucose (carbohydrate) levels. Sports drinks can be helpful for topping up energy levels during the game and/or training as well as replacing sweat sodium (salt) losses.

## BEFORE COMPETITION AND TRAINING

The aim is to start any exercise session or competition well hydrated. This requires drinking regularly throughout the day leading up to training or competition. Having a drink with all meals and snacks is a good start. Shortly before the training or competition begins, players should aim to consume 200-400 ml of fluid. This not only helps with hydration, but also prepares the stomach for accepting fluids throughout the game.

The main pre-event/training meal should be around 3 to 4 hours prior to the game. It needs to include some carbohydrate for fuel as well as some fluids for hydration. As an individual player or a team as a whole, find strategies that work before a game. Sometimes it can be beneficial for the team to eat together for the pre-match meal. It can be a great way to boost team moral and renew focus on the game ahead but also encourages all players to think about their pre-game nutritional needs.

Some suitable pre-game meal ideas can include:

- Pasta with a low-fat tomato-based sauce
- Salad sandwiches or rolls
- Soup served with bread rolls
- Toast/crumpets/muffins with ham/tuna + cheese
- Fruit or fruit salad with yoghurt + muesli

The pre-event snack should be eaten 1-2 hours prior to an event to provide fuel right through training or a game. Again, it should be carbohydrate based, low in fat and familiar, and most importantly, tried and tested in training.

Some suitable pre-game snack ideas include:

- Peanut butter & banana sandwich
- Toasted English muffin with your favourite spread
- Low fat fruit based muffin (e.g. banana muffin)
- Creamed rice
- Muesli bar
- A small bowl of cereal with low-fat milk

If solids don't sit well before a match, players could try:

- Low fat flavoured milk tetra packs
- Fruit smoothies
- Sports drink



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### EATING & DRINKING DURING COMPETITION

Indoor environments, coupled with high-intensity exercise can lead to high sweat losses, especially in larger players. Frequent breaks in game play, such as substitutions, stoppages, quarter and half time breaks, provide the perfect opportunity to get some fluids in. While water is a priority fluid during training and for hydration during the day, sports drinks during a game may be beneficial as they also deliver some carbohydrates to the brain and working muscles, provide electrolytes (e.g. sodium) to help replace sweat losses and can be more palatable than plain water.

### RECOVERY

There are three golden rules in recovery nutrition:

- Refuel muscle glycogen (carbohydrate stores)
- Repair muscle tissue (for maintenance & development)
- Rehydrate– replace fluids and salts lost through sweat

This means that recovery meals and snacks must contain carbohydrate (fuel), some protein (for muscle repair and/or gains) and plenty of fluids to replace sweat losses. Recovery can either be as a meal or snack (but should be consumed within ~60-90 minutes of finishing exercise). Fluids (mainly water) should also be consumed during the meal or snack.

Some snack suggestions include:

- A ham, salad & cheese sandwich
- Fruit salad + yoghurt + muesli
- A tuna salad wrap
- Low fat flavoured milk tetra pack
- Fruit smoothie
- Handful of fruit and nut mix

Players should have snacks ready to go so they don't rely on the venue to provide a snack because pies and lollies are not good choices!

Some suggestions for a recovery meal include:

- Baked beans and cheese on toast
- Pasta with a low-fat bolognese sauce
- Rice with a low-fat chicken curry
- Thai noodle salad with lean beef
- Homemade pizza with lean toppings
- Jacket potato with lean mince topping

### OTHER NUTRITIONAL TIPS

**Alcohol:** Excess alcohol consumption can impair recovery and rehydration and can indirectly (or directly) impact on individual performance. Athletes who choose to drink alcohol after a match should prioritise recovery and rehydration goals before consuming alcohol.

**Be organised!** Young players may need to move out of home for their sport before cooking skills can be developed. Planning meals ahead, a roster-system if rooming in with mates and some ready-to-go meals and snacks for the late nights can help to meet nutrition goals. An Accredited Sports Dietitian can help with shopping and cooking skills.

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