

## FACT SHEET

### FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT - CRICKET

#### ABOUT CRICKET

Cricket is played competitively in summer and while it is a game of skill, it also involves extended periods of time spent playing, with games lasting anywhere from 3 hours to 7 hours continued over 4-5 days, often in very hot conditions.

Teams are made up of batsmen and bowlers, a wicket keeper and possibly some all-rounders. Theoretically, all team members get to bat and field, while only the specialist bowlers and all-rounders are required to bowl. Competition is structured as either:

- Twenty20 fixtures, which involve one innings of maximum 20 overs per side
- Limited over (one-day) games, which also involve one innings (maximum 50 overs) per side, or;
- 4-5 day games (Test matches) which involve 2 innings per side

#### TRAINING DIET

Elite cricketers can have a busy training schedule with multiple sessions throughout the day. The intensity of sessions can range from low to very high, depending on the training goals of that session. Cricketers therefore need to focus on nutrient-dense foods such as cereals, fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meat/poultry/fish or vegetarian alternatives. The timing of meals also needs to be well planned to coincide with recovery between sessions. On heavier training days, athletes need to remember to include extra snacks to fuel the higher training load.

Cricket can involve long hours of low intensity activity and players can often find themselves gaining unwanted weight, particularly when enjoying the social aspects of cricket. Cricketers wanting to lose body fat need to assess their training load and may need to include extra aerobic exercise in addition to scheduled training sessions. Dietary intake also needs to be considered as fat and alcohol intakes are common nutrition issues in cricket that need to be addressed.

Nutrition strategies should be individualised based on intensity of the session, goals of the session, body size, body composition goals and the period of time before the next training session or game.

#### FLUID NEEDS

Fluid needs vary depending on your role in the team (e.g. batting, bowling), playing style and weather conditions. Keeping track of individual fluid losses is important as even relatively small fluid losses (~2% body weight) can impair bowling accuracy in skilled cricket players, impair concentration and performance in

general, as the body is less able to cool itself as efficiently. High fluid losses can also be extremely dangerous if good hydration practices are not in place.

Training is the best time to establish good hydration habits and monitor changes in day-to-day fluid losses under different conditions. Players should weigh themselves before and after innings (in a minimum of clothing, toweled off) to estimate fluid losses. For every 1 kg lost, it is generally assumed that this represents 1 L of fluid lost.

Warm-up, drinks and meal breaks provide the main opportunities to top up fluid intake during a match. Other opportunities to drink include during over changes, the fall of wickets and when you are not on the field.

It is difficult (and not necessary) to replace 100% of sweat losses during the game so drink at a rate that is comfortable and aims to replace ~80% of sweat losses. Using individual drink bottles helps to keep track of how much is consumed over the match. Be wary of drinking too much (exceeding your sweat rate) that you gain body mass over a match. It can lead to gastrointestinal discomfort and excessive need to urinate.

Sports drinks can also be useful to provide fuel (carbohydrate) as well as fluid during matches and training. Research shows that carbohydrate intake may enhance performance during matches by increasing endurance and delaying the onset of fatigue.

#### WHAT SHOULD I EAT BEFORE COMPETITION?

A challenge for cricketers is that they do not know whether they will be batting or bowling on the first day of a match until approximately 45 minutes prior to start time. As a result, they need to prepare for a match assuming they will be on the first day. Pre-game hydration is important to ensure cricketers begin the match in a well hydrated state. Passing pale yellow urine in the lead up to the game is a good sign of hydration.

When fuelling up before a match, eat a larger meal 2-4 hours prior to when you are likely to play, to allow time for your stomach to empty. Then, top up 1-2 hours before you are likely to play with a high carbohydrate snack, e.g. a jam sandwich or a muesli bar and a banana or even a liquid meal e.g. Sustagen Sport® may be good if you are prone to stomach upset from eating solid food before a game. This is also good to do between sessions and whilst waiting to play. Keep these snacks low in fat - fat slows food emptying from the stomach which can lead to stomach upsets on the field.

## FACT SHEET FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT - CRICKET

Eat enough food to feel comfortable (not overfull) and experiment with a variety of foods in training to determine those which feel most comfortable before a match. Try to include nutritious carbohydrate rich foods to prolonged energy levels. Fluids should always accompany these meals and snacks (e.g. water, sports drinks, juice).

### EATING AND DRINKING DURING COMPETITION

Players should take advantage of the breaks between play to top up fuel and fluid stores. High carbohydrate, low fat foods and fluids are the preferred choices although food selection will be up to the individual. Include small snacks every 1-3 hours whilst waiting to bat. If you know you won't be batting for a while you can eat a more substantial snack.

Ideally, meals consumed during a cricket match should provide carbohydrate to keep blood glucose levels topped up, be low in fat and easy to digest.

Some good choices include:

- Low fat smoothies
- Low fat yoghurt
- Fruit
- Sandwiches with lean meat or spread
- Muffins or crumpets with jam/honey
- Pasta or rice with plain sauce.
- Cereal bars or sports bars

At drinks and meal breaks, replacing fluid losses need to be a priority. Drink breaks are generally scheduled every hour. Active players including the bowler, wicket keeper or batsman and also fielders in hot weather are likely to benefit from sports drinks to rehydrate and glycogen stores.

### RECOVERY

The post game meal should focus on replenishing fuel stores and rehydration. This means having nutritious carbohydrate rich foods and plenty of fluids. In cricket however (as with many team sports), there is a culture of alcohol consumption to celebrate or commiserate after a game in the sheds immediately after the game.

Alcohol directly competes with the goals of recovery and affects rehydration, refueling, muscle repair and can increase inflammation to any tissue damaged in play. Recovery choices are critical when playing multiple games in a day or backing up for another game/training the next day.

Below are some tips for optimal recovery:

- Rehydrate with water and other fluids (e.g. sports drink, flavoured milk) to replace fluid losses.
- Refuel & repair with carbohydrate and protein as soon as possible (i.e. within 30m minutes) after the game BEFORE you drink alcohol
- Replacing fluids, carbohydrate and protein should be the priority BEFORE drinking alcohol. If you do choose to drink, alternate alcoholic beverages with non-alcoholic drinks.

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

- The nutrition needs of individuals within a cricket team can vary considerably. Fast bowlers often have higher energy needs than batsmen and may have more difficulty maintaining a higher body weight.
- There can also be a lot of sitting and waiting in cricket which predisposes some players to excess weight and body fat levels, particularly if they are prone to boredom eating or consuming large quantities of soft drink.
- It is very important to be prepared on match days and ensure that nutritious and appropriate foods and fluids are available for snacks and meals throughout the day.
- A multivitamin/mineral supplement may be indicated when travelling overseas to environments with unfamiliar foods and fluids, and/or extreme environmental conditions.