



FACT SHEET

FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT - HOCKEY

ABOUT HOCKEY

Hockey (also known as field hockey internationally) is a team-based sport played in two 35-minute halves with 10 players on the field and one player in the goals at any one time, with a short break at half-time.

The game is played at a fast pace, with short bursts of high intensity sprints along with dribbling, passing, tackling and shooting for goal, which requires a combination of endurance, strength, speed, agility and skill. High energy requirements, coupled with fluid loss and injuries (from flying balls and/or sticks) makes well-established nutrition and hydration strategies a must for optimal performance.

Depending on the level of the athlete, training sessions may range from one session per week to one to two sessions per day. These sessions may cover individual stick and ball skills, weights, running and/or sprint training.

Hockey is predominantly played in the winter months and the competitive season usually involves one game per week on the weekend, and at higher levels, there may be tournaments with a series of games played over a short period of time. Travelling interstate and overseas is also a regular occurrence for elite hockey players.

TRAINING DIET

Training is physically demanding, which sets up increased energy and carbohydrate requirements. A diet rich in quality carbohydrate foods is important to provide adequate energy to maintain a high standard of play and also assists recovery. Hockey is not a professional sport, and many players have full-time jobs or study to commit to, on top of training and match schedules. This creates a very busy lifestyle, and good nutrition habits can take a back seat, especially if the athlete lacks the skills to shop and cook. Takeaway foods can be a trap, but reading food labels, learning how to prepare meals ahead can make a difference both on and off the field by aiding recovery and reduce fatigue.

Hockey players need to focus on eating nutrient-dense carbohydrate meals and snacks such as pasta, rice, bread, cereal, vegetables, fruit and dairy products. Ideally, players should aim to have. Recovery meals or snacks should be based on carbohydrates and protein and combined with fluids to replace sweat losses that may have occurred during the session.

FLUID NEEDS

The fluid needs of hockey players during training and games are generally high because of the high intensity, "stop and go" style of exercise increases sweat rates. If games are played during hot and humid conditions this will increase fluid needs.

Dehydration can negatively affect exercise ability, skill execution and decision making and thus can significantly affect hockey performance. Producing regular amounts of clear urine is a useful indicator of good hydration status before exercise.

To stay hydrated, drink plenty of fluids before, during and after hockey. As hockey is played in the cooler months, players may not to feel the need to replace water losses. Rather than relying on sweat rate or thirst to determine fluid needs you can assess how much fluid you have lost by weighing yourself before and after the training session or game and aim to drink 1.5L of fluid for every kilogram of weight lost.

Sports drinks can be useful during training and matches as they provide a source of carbohydrate (for fuelling on the field) and small amounts of electrolytes (salts) that may be lost during play.

In hot conditions, pay extra attention to fluid needs by having plenty of cool, refreshing fluids on hand, drinking at every opportunity (e.g. during breaks and when coming off the field) and monitoring and replacing losses aggressively after a match/training session.

WHAT SHOULD I EAT BEFORE COMPETITION

The pre-game meal should be eaten 2-3 hours prior to the start of the match. It should be based on carbohydrate options and be low in fibre and fat may to minimise stomach discomfort. It is important to ensure the meal is well planned and uses familiar foods and fluids. Some suitable pre-game meals include:

- Breakfast cereal + low fat milk
- Fresh/dried or canned fruit + yoghurt + low fat milk
- English muffins/crumpets/toast with jam or honey
- Pasta + tomato-based sauce or rice dish
- Liquid meal supplement (e.g. Sustagen Sport®)

FACT SHEET

FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT - HOCKEY

WHAT SHOULD I EAT DURING COMPETITION

Although the half-time break is brief (usually five to ten minutes) it is the best opportunity for nutrition during play, and players should make use of this break to consume fluids. Water is useful for replacing fluid losses although midfielders may benefit from drinking sports drink during the break as they tend to have the greatest requirements for carbohydrate and fluid during a game. Muesli bars and chopped fruit pieces are also be good sources of carbohydrate.

- Be well prepared - don't rely on food being available or suitable at the venue you are playing at
- Alcohol is part of the social culture of many team sports. Ideally, an athlete should rehydrate and refuel before having an alcoholic beverage, if at all.

© This is a sports nutrition publication of
Sports Dietitians Australia.

WHAT ABOUT RECOVERY

It is important to refuel with carbohydrate-rich foods after training and games in order to begin replenishing muscle glycogen stores for future sessions. This is especially important during tournaments when a number of matches are played within a short time frame, or during weeks of heavy training.

It is also important to include a protein source in recovery for muscle tissue repair and growth, especially after a weight-training session.

As a rule of thumb, aim to consume a recovery meal or snack within ~60 minutes of finishing a training session or match. This should contain carbohydrates, protein and a source of fluid.

Some suggestions for a recovery meal include:

- Baked beans/spaghetti with cheese on toast
- Pasta with a low-fat bolognese sauce
- Rice with a low-fat chicken curry
- Thai noodle salad with lean beef + fluids
- Grilled chicken breast with roasted potato + veggies

OTHER NUTRITION TIPS

- Supplements are generally not necessary. A balanced healthy diet will usually meet all of the nutritional requirements for hockey players
- Low body fat levels are advantageous in hockey, for agility, speed and endurance throughout the game, especially for 'running' players. Body fat levels can creep up due to injury or time off from training, usually due to an energy imbalance (too much food for a reduced physical workload). This can be managed by keeping track of body levels and weight or consulting an Accredited Sports Dietitian.

SDA - Creating Leaders in Sports Nutrition Practice