

FACT SHEET SURF LIFE SAVING

ABOUT SURF LIFE SAVING

Surf life savers are specially trained volunteers who patrol Australian beaches to ensure a safe beach environment for the whole community. Surf Life Saving Australia has more than 115,000 members, of all ages, in 310 surf life saving clubs around the Australian coastline. Surf sports are an opportunity for surf life savers to engage in regular competition to fine tune their skills and fitness. Surf sports events are highly varied with some events lasting a few seconds and other events lasting over an hour. Physiological demands therefore vary considerably depending on the event which may include running, swimming, surf boat rowing and paddling (on a board or a surf ski).

TRAINING DIET

Training diets can vary considerably due to the different types of training undertaken for the many different events. However, a diet based around good quality carbohydrates and protein and low in fat is typical for a surf life saver. Including plenty of whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, low fat dairy products and lean meat, fish or poultry will ensure the athlete gets sufficient nutrients. See below for a sample training plan.

MEAL	FOOD
Before training	1 bowl cereal + low fat milk + sliced fruit
Snack	Wholegrain cereal bar + small tub low fat yoghurt
Lunch	1-2 Salad and lean meat sandwiches
Before training	2 crumpets with honey and banana
Training Session	Sports drinks may be helpful for topping up fuel (carbohydrate) supply as well as replacing fluid losses
Recovery	Tetra pack low fat flavoured milk
Dinner	Stir fry with lean meat and plenty of vegetables + serve of rice or noodles
Snack	Low fat custard + fruit salad
Don't forget to sip on water at meals and over the day	

Please note that this is a sample diet ONLY. Requirements will vary depending on age, gender and level of training.

FLUID NEEDS

Sweat losses, and therefore fluid requirements, during surf carnivals can be quite high during competition as events are typically held over the summer months and athletes are often required to compete several times throughout the day. A good strategy to ensure fluids are replaced during competition is to develop an individualised rehydration plan.

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This can involve writing out a schedule of possible races for the day; identifying opportunities for fluid intake during the day and ensuring a supply of cool, pleasant tasting drinks are conveniently accessible. As race times may vary during the day due to unpredictable factors, athletes may benefit from carrying a drink bottle with them to ensure they have access to suitable fluids when needed.

EATING BEFORE COMPETITION

Surf carnivals usually involve a full day of competition which can start as early as 7am. It is important to start the day well hydrated and with muscle fuel (glycogen) levels topped up.

One of the challenges in pre-competition eating can be late changes to race starts. Some athletes will opt to eat nothing to avoid competing before competing to avoid gastrointestinal upset. A high carbohydrate meal (usually breakfast) 2 to 4 hours before the start of competition is a good chance for a final fuel top up before the day begins. Suitable options can include cereal, toast or crumpets with jam or honey, raisin toast, pikelets with banana, fresh or tinned fruit or spaghetti on toast. For athletes racing early in the morning, a light breakfast might be preferred e.g. toast or an English muffin with a glass of milk. If you are too nervous to eat solid food, a liquid breakfast may be easier to manage e.g. a fruit smoothie or liquid meal replacement. To avoid stomach discomfort, foods low in fibre and fat may be preferred.

Fluids are also important in the 24 hours leading up to competition. Monitoring urine colour leading up to an event is a good way for athletes to ensure that they are well hydrated and urine should be pale yellow in colour on race morning. Athletes should aim to consume 300-500ml of fluid with the pre-competition meal and continue to sip on water or sports drink in the lead up to the competition.

EATING AND DRINKING DURING COMPETITION?

Surf life saving competitions often require athletes to compete several times in a single day. Replacement of fuel and fluid is very important between events at a surf carnival. As carbohydrate is the preferred muscle fuel during high intensity exercise, foods rich in carbohydrate should be consumed between races. Foods that are convenient, portable and easy to digest are ideal during competition. Good examples include fruit, muesli bars, dried fruit, crackers, light sandwiches, low-fat fruit yoghurt and fruit buns. A good idea is to take an Esky™ that contains plenty of different options foods and a selection of the drinks as carnival locations can be some distance away from shops. Ensure the Esky™ is in a convenient location for easy access between races.

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Surf lifesavers should develop an eating plan that fits in with the event schedule and include foods that are familiar and will not affect their performance. Practising competition eating during training sessions will help to identify food choices that will suit best.

If less than 30 minutes between races: carbohydrate containing fluids such as sports drinks or juice or chopped fruit are the good options as they are rapidly digested from the gut

If 30-60 minutes between races: sandwiches with honey/jam/banana, sports bars and muesli bars are good choices

If more than 1-2 hours between races: a more substantial meal such as small serves of pasta, rice or noodle-based dishes with low fat sauce/toppings or sandwiches/rolls can be eaten

RECOVERY

Recovery after training and competition can be accelerated by consuming a meal or snack containing carbohydrate to replace muscle glycogen stores; protein to speed up muscle repair and fluid to replace sweat losses. Ideally a recovery meal or snack should be consumed within 30-60 minutes of finishing training or competition. Recovery foods are particularly important after a day of competition during surf carnivals that last a whole weekend. Examples of recovery snacks that include carbohydrate, protein and fluid are:

- Low fat yoghurt + 600ml sports drink
- Low fat fruit smoothie
- Ham sandwich + banana + water
- 600ml reduced fat flavoured milk

Nutrition recovery is especially important during carnivals that are held over multiple days to help prevent fatigue developing over the competition period. For more information, see the Recovery Nutrition factsheet.

OTHER NUTRITION TIPS

- Surf life saving competitions can often mean travelling to different carnival locations, which can disrupt nutritional preparation before an event. Athletes should pack lunches and snacks (e.g. muesli bars, fruit and nut mixes, tinned fruit etc) for when travelling (so as not to rely on airport or roadside catering) and should plan their meals ahead.
- If self-catering, menus and shopping lists should be planned in advance to help meals at the accommodation run smoothly. Appropriate restaurants in the local area can be found on the internet before travelling.
- Although supplements may be tempting, for the majority of athletes, fuelling and recovery needs can be met with well-planned food and fluid choices. For more individualized advice, is important to speak to Sports Dietitian if you are interested in supplements.

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