

FACT SHEET

FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT – BASEBALL

ABOUT BASEBALL

Baseball is a game played between two teams of nine players who take turns batting and fielding. The batting team aims to score runs by hitting the ball thrown by a pitcher (from the fielding team) and then running through four bases (first, second, third and home). A run is only scored if a player returns to home base.

It is a fast paced and intensive sport requiring a mixture of motor skills, coordination, agility, speed and strength. In addition, baseball players also need a high power-to-weight ratio to be both quick and strong.

In Australia, baseball is played at junior level through to elite with many athletes aiming to play in a major league teams in the USA. At the junior levels, there is a modified version of baseball known as Tee Ball that introduces young players (5-10 yrs) to the fundamentals of the sport. As players progress they will often train and play at a club level and may also be associated with representative state or national teams as well as talent development programs. For some players there are also opportunities to attend scouting camps for international competitions.

A typical baseball season runs for 26 weeks with one to two games per day on a weekend. In Australia, there can be both summer and winter leagues.

Each game usually consists of 9 innings with teams switching between batting and fielding every time there are 3 players "out". Interestingly, baseball is one of few sports that do not have a pre-defined time limit and game time can vary between 1.5 hours to over 3 hours.

While there are 9 starting players, many substitute players are permitted and there are often five or more starting pitchers and further relief pitchers in reserve. Once a player is substituted they may not re-enter the game. At junior levels, there are also limitations on the number of pitches each player can have in a match.

TRAINING DIET

Baseball training consists of a mixture of strength, speed, skill specific, sprinting and weight training exercises. The main nutritional goals for baseball players are to maintain energy levels and concentration as well as ensure adequate hydration for performance.

Requirements for each individual player depends on their playing position, body composition goals and differing training programs. A nutritious eating pattern helps to support the needs of fit, energetic and strong baseball players. Nutrition is often based around lean proteins for muscle repair and recovery, carbohydrate appropriately timed for fuelling. In addition, fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds and healthy fats provide important vitamins and minerals.

Focus should be on eating on a wide variety of nutrient rich foods (cereals, wholegrains, fruit, vegetables, dairy products, lean meat and poultry, fish, nuts and legumes). Timing of meals and snacks over the day can improve nutrient absorption, manage appetite and maximise fuelling and recovery, training and performance.

FLUID NEEDS

Baseball requires fast pace running, quick decision-making, concentration, co-ordination and ball skills. Research shows that dehydration can increase skill errors, reduce concentration and impair speed and co-ordination

In order to stay hydrated, players should drink fluids before, during and after training and matches. However, body fluid needs will depend on individual fluid losses, which vary depending on individual sweat rate.

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.

As baseball is played outdoors and can be played over several hours, it is important for players to drink regularly throughout the game to maintain good hydration levels.

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EATING BEFORE COMPETITION

Baseball players should begin each game well fueled and hydrated. As an additional challenge, baseball games may extend for several hours and time may be spent travelling to and from the game venue. Remember that game-day nutrition is impacted by the quality of weeklong nutrition.

Each athlete is different, but players will often eat a pre-game meal around 3 to 4 hours before the start of the match. This meal should contain some carbohydrate for fuel as well as some fluids for hydration. A small amount of protein in the pre-game meal is also useful, as it can help to prevent hunger during the game. To avoid stomach discomfort, you may choose foods low in fibre and fat to aid digestion.

Some suitable pre-game meal options include:

- Wholegrain cereal with milk or yoghurt and fruit
- Toast with eggs or baked beans
- Sandwich with simple fillings
- Chicken and vegetable risotto
- Beef stir-fry with noodles

An extra carbohydrate based snack can be used as a final top up of fuel stores 1-2 hours leading up to the match.

Some suitable pre-game snack ideas include:

- Fresh fruit or fruit salad
- Yoghurt with nuts
- Plain or fruit toast with peanut butter
- Fruit smoothie (great option if feeling nervous before a game)

EATING AND DRINKING DURING COMPETITION

As baseball games are unpredictable and can last for an extended period of time, it is best to come prepared with plenty of snacks and fluid choices to last through all circumstances.

Snacks such as fruit, cereal bars and light sandwiches are beneficial for baseball players with high workloads to keep up fuel supplies for their brains and muscle, and for

managing hunger during long games. These snacks can be used as a top up throughout game time.

While water is the priority fluid during training and for hydration during the day, and in most matches, sports or electrolyte drinks may be useful during a game for players identified as having high energy requirements or big workloads.

Players should work closely with an Accredited Sports Dietitian to trial nutrition strategies during training and matches to find which foods work best for each player.

RECOVERY

The main goals for recovery after training or games are to:

- Refuel muscle glycogen (replace fuel stores)
- Repair muscle (for function & development)
- Rehydrate (replace fluids lost through sweat)

Recovery meals and snacks should contain carbohydrate (fuel), some protein (for muscle repair and development) and plenty of fluids and electrolytes to replace sweat losses. A recovery meal or snack should be consumed soon after exercise period, especially training or competing more than once in a day.

Some recovery food suggestions include:

- Wrap or sandwich with ham, cheese and salad
- Dairy-based fruit smoothie
- Homemade pizzas with chicken, cheese & veggies
- Fruit salad with yoghurt and mixed nuts

OTHER NUTRITION TIPS

- **Plan ahead** Players should pack snacks to eat as venues don't always provide appropriate choices. Cold drinks should also be packed for long days of match play, especially in hot conditions.
- Muscle gain** Building muscle requires time, a good training and nutrition plan, and the right genetics
- Supplements** In most cases, nutrition needs can be easily met through foods, however, an Accredited Sports Dietitian can help identify any supplement which may be beneficial to health or performance.