

FACT SHEET

FOOD FOR YOUR SPORT CRICKET



ABOUT CRICKET

Cricket is an international bat and ball game played at a variety of levels by both genders from primary school age to adults. Predominantly an outdoor Summer sport, matches are played between two teams on a natural grass field, with a central rectangular pitch with wickets (a set of 3 wooden stumps) at each end. The objective of the game is to accumulate more runs than the opposition team. A team comprises of 11 players with batters, bowlers (fast and spin) and a wicket keeper. A "12th man" is a reserve fielder should any player become injured, however also delivers drinks, snacks and towels at designated breaks. All team members bat and field, while only the bowlers and all-rounders bowl. Cricket has three forms of the game based on duration. Matches are measured in overs (6 balls bowled per over) and an 'innings' is a descriptor for the number of times the teams contest each other.

Format	Innings/Overs	Duration
T20	1/ 20 (max)	~3 hours: 75-90min innings, 10-20min interval
One Day	1/ 50 (max)	6 hours: 20-30min tea break
Test	2/ unlimited	4-5 days: 45-1hr Lunch, 15min-20min Tea

Players are informed if their team is batting or bowling/fielding approximately 30-40mins before a match. T20 and One Day matches conclude when the overs have been bowled or if one team passes the previous innings run score. Tests have an unlimited number of overs, but once 10 players are out, the game ceases despite the number of overs or innings remaining. With different lengths of the game, this impacts workloads. T20 matches are the most explosive, while Test matches require endurance and extended concentration in the heat. Fast bowlers have the highest physical demands with distances of up to 20km a day covered in modern elite One Day and Test matches.

TRAINING FOODS

Elite cricketers execute individualised nutrition plans based on their role (fast bowler vs batter), as well as stage of the season (winter preseason vs summer competition). This is achieved by matching their meal and snack patterns to meet varying daily to monthly workloads.

Although specific quantities are individualised, all players firstly consume a nutrient-dense base of real foods including wholegrains,

fruit, vegetables, dairy products, lean proteins and vegetarian alternatives. From this base, additional snacks and recovery foods are added depending on the day and sessions. For example, extra fruit, yoghurt and muesli bars provide carbohydrate to fuel higher intensity sessions (long net/match sim sessions), while higher protein choices like tuna and crackers, boiled eggs or Greek yoghurt and nuts are chosen before and after lower intensity/duration sessions (gym, fielding or technical) to maximise muscle recovery and growth. Cricketers wanting to lose body fat would benefit from working with an Accredited Sports Dietitian to identify individual fueling, recovery and nutrient periodisation strategies to stimulate body composition changes.

HYDRATION NEEDS

Dehydration as little as 1% loss of body weight can negatively impact bowling accuracy, line and length, sprint speed and concentration. Dehydration also negatively impacts the body's ability to cool itself through sweat. Cricketers need to match fluid intake to their sweat losses and this is achieved by topping up with cold fluids during over-changes, the fall of wickets, when waiting to bat in the stands as well as during meal and tea breaks. Training is the best time to establish good hydration habits and monitor changes in day-to-day fluid losses under different conditions. The Fluids in Sport Factsheet has a number of useful tips to help optimise hydration

EATING BEFORE MATCHES

A challenge for cricketers is that they do not know whether they will be batting or bowling on the first day until 30-45 minutes prior to start time. As a result, they need to prepare for a match assuming they will be performing their role first. When fuelling for a match, eating enough food to feel comfortable (but not overfull) and selecting lower fiber or 'lighter' choices that are gentle on nervous stomachs is important, plus experimenting with a variety of foods in training. A larger meal 2-4 hours prior to playing will allow time for digestion. Top up 1-2 hours before the start with a carb rich snack (e.g. simple sandwich, muesli bar, fruit). Snacks should be low fat as fat slows digestion and can lead to tummy upsets on the field. Carb rich fluids such as smoothies or flavored milk (low lactose) can be good if an athlete is prone to stomach upset from nerves or solid food before a game. Pre-game hydration is important to ensure cricketers begin the match fully hydrated. Pale yellow urine in the lead up to the game is usually a good sign of hydration.

EATING AND DRINKING DURING MATCHES

As cricket matches are often played in hot conditions, replacing fluid losses and keeping cool at breaks in play must be a priority to delay mental and physical fatigue. In addition, carbohydrate can enhance concentration and stimulate the brain to maintain motivation and preserve muscle power.

Practical hydration and cooling strategies include:

- Using individual bottles to keep track of fluid intake
- Choosing higher electrolyte fluids as the sodium content drives thirst and promotes fluid absorption.
- Adding ice to bottles and storing in eskies to keep cool
- Eating crushed ice or fruit juice based icy poles
- Using cool towels around the neck and face • Taking a cold shower at innings breaks (if you can!)
- Sitting in an air-conditioned room or in front of fans
- Although evidence is still emerging, consuming a menthol lolly or gum could stimulate 'cooling receptors' and reduce perceived exertion.

Sports drinks can provide a convenient and compact source of fuel (carbohydrate) and fluid during intense matches if eating is uncomfortable for the player. Including small easily digested snacks (20-40g carb) every 1-3 hours while waiting to bat is a good idea. If crickets are not batting for a while, a more substantial snack can be eaten. Avoiding high fat pastries, tarts, slices and cakes that are commonly available at breaks is suggested, as these can cause gut upset.

Suitable snack choices include:

- Dairy based smoothies or Flavoured milk
- Yoghurt
- Fruit fresh or tinned fruit in natural juice
- Sandwiches with lean meat or spread
- Fruit muffins or crumpets with jam/honey
- Sushi rolls
- Grainy crackers + vegemite and cheese

RECOVERY

Post game meals focus on carbohydrate (refuel), protein (for muscle repair), fluids and electrolytes (to rehydrate and replace sweat losses) and coloured vegetables (antioxidants to revitalise). A recovery meal or snack should be consumed soon after a game, especially if matches are played over multiple days.

Suitable options include:

- Wholegrain lean meat and salad sandwich/wrap
- Greek yoghurt with blueberries and muesli • Homemade lean meat burgers with salad
- Chicken and vegetable stir-fry on rice or noodles.

As with many team sports, there is a culture of alcohol immediately after matches to celebrate or commiserate. Alcohol directly can impact recovery as it affects rehydration, refueling, muscle repair, bone strength 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.

OTHER NUTRITION TIPS

Q). *Are nerves stopping you from fueling and hydrating?*

A). Aim to have small, but frequent (every 2-3 hours), snacks planned throughout the day rather than relying on a large breakfast, lunch and dinner.

This will ensure your brain and muscles are guaranteed a steady source of fuel for concentration and performance, while keeping the gut as light as possible.

This can also prevent over consuming (non-hungry or comfort eating) while also avoiding under-consuming (due to nausea and low appetite).

Fit these foods and drinks in where practical e.g. In the drinks bag run out, at the fall of a wicket; while waiting on the bench and in the eskies around the ground.

Key Message: Plan ahead...!

Attention Teenage Fast Bowlers!

Q). *Did you know that your skeleton's peak growth time is between 9-13 years for females and 12-15 years for males?*

Q). *What does this have to do with bowling?*

A). Fast bowlers with bones that are not provided with enough energy or calcium are less likely to withstand the forces generated in training or matches, therefore are at a higher risk of injury. Stress fractures in the spine can be prevented with a diet rich in energy, protein and calcium, in conjunction with careful planning of workloads and rest.

Because we know that 50% of your peak bone mass is laid down during these teenage growth years, calcium-rich foods such as yoghurt, milk, cheese and calcium-fortified foods should feature daily, specifically around training.

Key tips:

- Enjoy a yoghurt, smoothie, flavoured milk/calcium fortified soy milk or cheese sandwich in the 60 mins before Cricket to help protect your bones
- Aim for a total of 3-4 serves of Dairy or calcium-fortified alternatives a day! And for more information about bone health click here!