



# healthyfood@sport

## Be Your Best on Game Day! Fuelling for Finals – Fact Sheet

For many sporting clubs, finals will occur shortly. With all of the excitement associated with these events it is easy to overlook proper nutrition. At this time of year, coaches and parents working with young athletes engaged in sport often ask “What should they be eating to perform their best on game day?”

This fact sheet presents a step-by-step nutrition guide addressing what to eat the night before competition, as well as suggestions for food and fluid before, during and after competition.

### Night Before Game Day

For most sporting events, carbohydrates are the primary source of energy. Your pre-competition dinner should be high in carbohydrate and low in fat, protein and fibre. To avoid stomach upset and discomfort you should eat familiar foods prior to competition.

### Breakfast on Game Day

Pre-game breakfast needs to take into account individual food preferences. There is no one single food or "magic meal" that will ensure top performance. Children should eat their final pre-game breakfast 2-4 hours before competition. The pre-game breakfast helps to:

- Provide energy to fuel the muscles
- Sustain performance throughout the game
- Settle the “butterflies” associated with excitement and combat feelings of hunger.

### During the Game

Hydration is the key before the game. Children should have their last drink about 15 to 20 minutes before the start of the game. Allow water to be consumed at regular intervals (150 to 300ml), ideally every 15 minutes or whenever they have a break during competition. Do not wait until children feel thirsty as some may already be dehydrated.

Be aware of foods with high sugar content such as lollies, flavoured drinks and sports drinks. Although they contain carbohydrates they do not contain sources of protein, vitamins and mineral and can also promote tooth decay; thus they should be limited. Orange wedges are traditionally provided at half time. These are great as a refreshing boost.

### Lollies vs Oranges (busting the myths)

- Both are sources of carbohydrate.
- Oranges at half time have not been shown to be detrimental to sports performance.
- Oranges at half time have not been shown to increase risk of cramps.
- Oranges at half time have not been shown to increase dental erosion.

### After the Game

To support sporting recovery, encourage intake of foods rich in carbohydrate, protein and low in fat, along with plenty of water to satisfy thirst.

*Milk* is an easy and effective drink for rehydrating and replenishing tired muscles with carbohydrates and protein. There are many pre-packaged milk based products that are easy to pack and well-liked by children. Remember to choose low fat products.

Please refer over the page for example items that can be consumed the night before the game, breakfast on game day, during the game and after the game.



## The night before game day

Familiar foods for optimal energy stores

- Pasta, such as low-fat lasagne or spaghetti with tomato sauce
  - Vegetable and meat stir-fry
  - Baked potato (topped with shredded lean meat, low-fat cheese and vegetables)
  - Burritos with lean meat and/or beans and vegetables
- Note: This is NOT the time to experiment with unfamiliar foods

## Breakfast before the game

Top-up fluid and energy reserves

- Baked beans on toast
  - Oats/ cereals with low-fat milk
  - Fresh/ dried/ canned fruits with low-fat custard or yoghurt
  - Eggs on toast, as well as fruit or fruit juice
  - Fruit smoothie (low-fat milk/yoghurt)
  - Raisin toast as well as low-fat milk
- Note: Breakfast should be eaten at least 2hrs prior to the commencement of the game

## During the game

Resist fatigue

- Cereal bars
  - 1/2 sandwich – thick sliced bread and 2 tbsps. of jam
  - Banana sandwich
  - Fresh/ dried fruit mix
  - Muffins, scones or English muffins/crumpets
- Note: Don't forget to drink during competition

## After the game

Recovery is the key

- Fresh/ canned fruit
  - Breakfast bar or muesli bar
  - Fruit smoothie (low-fat milk/yoghurt)
  - Toasted low-fat cheese sandwich
  - Baked potato and beans with grated low-fat cheese
  - Low-fat yoghurt with muesli and berries.
- Note: Cool fluids decrease core temperature

### Acknowledgements:

Kid's health

[www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

Sports Dietitians Australia

[www.sportsdietitians.com.au](http://www.sportsdietitians.com.au)

Australian Institute of Sports

[www.ausport.gov.au](http://www.ausport.gov.au)

Dairy Australia

[www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Health-and-nutrition/Media-and-campaigns/Campaigns/Milk-natures-sports-drink.aspx](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/Health-and-nutrition/Media-and-campaigns/Campaigns/Milk-natures-sports-drink.aspx)

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