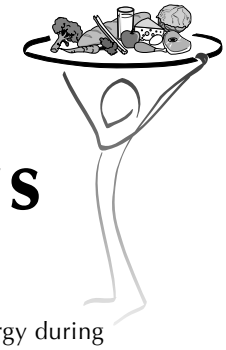
Nutrition and Fluids for Developmental Hockey Players



Hockey is an intermittent sport with high intensity skating shifts followed by brief rest intervals. The main fuel used by hockey players is carbohydrate (i.e., blood glucose, muscle and liver glycogen). Hockey players generally fatigue because of depleted carbohydrate-energy stores, dehydration and/or a build-up of lactic acid (muscle burn). Good nutrition habits before, during, and after hockey games and practices will ensure players perform at their best! Eating well all year round can help a young rookie to grow and develop as well as progress to a higher level of play (Fueling the Young Athlete).

SINGLE GAME SITUATION

Before

A high carbohydrate diet consumed 24 hours before a hockey game will top up energy reserves (From Training Diet to Meal Plans). The immediate pre-exercise meal and/or snack containing ample carbohydrates (with low-fat foods) will ensure optimal energy and mental alertness for games (Fluids and Foods BEFORE Training/Competition).

Generally allow:

- 3-4 hours for a large meal to digest
  (e.g. pasta with meat sauce and salad)
- 2-3 hours for a smaller meal to digest
  (e.g. sandwich, fruit and yogurt)
- 1-2 hours for a small snack and/or liquid meal to digest
  (e.g. bowl of cereal with fruit)

Caution: avoid "energy" drinks which lead to short term energy that doesn't last.

During

Players should sip fluids after ***every*** shift to prevent dehydration symptoms (i.e., elevated heart rates, fatigue, and muscle cramps); most players will need 400-800 mL for every hour of exertion (Fluids for Athletes). One gulp is approximately one ounce (30 mL) so four gulps (4 oz / 125 mL) taken after each of four shifts adds up to sufficient hydration (16 oz / 500 mL) over an hour.

After

Recovery nutrition begins within minutes after a game or practice and includes restoring energy (carbohydrates), repairing muscle (protein), plus replenishing fluids and electrolytes (i.e. sodium, potassium). Portable foods and fluids brought to the rink can speed the recovery process, followed by a nutritious meal (Fluids and Foods AFTER Training/Competition).

TOURNAMENTS

Players are challenged to have consistent energy during tournaments. Consuming extra carbohydrates days before a tournament begins, followed by the pre-game guidelines leading into each game are recommended (From Training Diet to Meal Plans; Tournament Tips). Snacks with fluids **between periods** (e.g. grapes, orange sections, bites of sports bars, sport drinks) can be helpful to maintain energy levels. Post-game immediate nutrition is **critical** so players are energized for subsequent games (Fluids and Foods AFTER Training/Competition). Advice about suitable restaurant choices and travel concerns may be useful when playing away from home (Nutrition Away from Home; Checklist for the Travelling Athlete and Coach).

GAINING MUSCLE

Building muscle may be desirable since a muscular player may be faster on the ice and have more physical size to withstand "checking". However, supplementation (e.g. creatine, protein) ***is not*** the short cut to gaining muscle; instead players should:

- Do resistance training 2-3 times a week
- Add 500-1000 extra calories daily
- Eat 3 meals with 3-4 snacks, 24-7
- Plan "mini-meals" as hearty snacks
- Drink their beverages towards the end of meals
- Choose energy dense foods (cheese, nut butters, trailmix, etc.)

See the tip sheets Gaining Weight for Athletes and Nutritional Dietary Supplements FAQs for more information.

SNAC Sport Nutrition Advisory Committee
Comité consultatif sur la nutrition sportive

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