EATING *for* PERFORMANCE
PRE EVENT

Pre event nutrition

As an athlete, your goal is to perform to your maximum potential as long as you can. A range of factors can impair performance, including issues related to nutrition. The overall goal of pre event nutrition is to eat the right foods to delay the onset of factors that cause fatigue, or impaired performance. It is important to remember that food eaten throughout the training week is just as important as food and fluid consumed pre, and during the event.

AFL is a "start & stop" game that is played at a high intensity for over an hour, therefore it is important you have adequate carbohydrate stores in the body to reduce the risk of early onset of fatigue or performance. Food is used as fuel once the nutrients have been digested and absorbed so it is important to also consider when you eat as well as what you eat.

Myth: Carbo loading. Carbohydrate loading is only recommended for moderate to high intensity sports that exceed 90 minutes, therefore this is not applicable to AFL. Shorter-term exercise is unlikely to benefit from carbo loading as the body's usual carbohydrate stores are adequate. Carbo loading is generally not practical to achieve in team sports where games are played every 3-4 days either as it requires days of preparation.

Pre event meals should be consumed in the 4 hours prior to your game (this can coincide with breakfast lunch or late lunch, depending on when your game is). Your pre event meal plays a huge role in fine tuning your game preparation. This meal should include carbohydrate rich foods and drinks. This will increase the amount of energy stored in your muscles. This will allow you to perform better for longer. This meal should contain 3-4g per kg of body weight of carbohydrates. The type of carbohydrate consumed is also important, low G.I carbohydrates were once said to be recommended but recent research suggests that consuming high G.I carbohydrates prior to exercise is ok, as long as you can consume them throughout the game. It is also important to consume foods that you are familiar with and you know wont upset your stomach. Reducing your fibre content as well as your fat and protein content in your meals prior to the game can reduce the risk of an upset stomach, this is because fat, fibre and protein take a long to digest.

Your next meal should be consumed 1-2 hours prior to your game, this meal should only be a small meal, and should contain mainly carbohydrates.

Another meal can be consumed 1 hour prior to your game, this should be a very small meal, preferably a liquid meal such as a sports drink (depending on the level you are playing).

Hydration is also an important factor in your pre event meal, make sure you are consuming fluid (preferably water) with each of your meals. It is important that you are fully hydrated prior to your game as only 2% dehydration can cause impaired performance. Make sure your urine is clear prior to your game. Example of a pre event meal leading up to an AFL game.

Example of a pre event meal leading up to an AFL game.

Example meal 4 hours prior to the game
Oatmeal, 1 bowl
Apple sauce ½ cup
Honey 2 tablespoons
Milk (almond, soy or regular) 1 cup
Juice or Sports drink, 2 cups (dependant on level)

Example meal 2 hours prior to the game
Cereal bar or
Smoothie or
Fruit flavoured yoghurt

Example meal 1 hour prior to the game (Required only at high levels)
Sports gel or
Sports drink

NOTE: It is important to trial these foods with trainings first, in order to avoid an upset stomach.

Example Recipe

Bacon and Potato Cakes

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 1 pkt Bacon & Onion Soup Mix
- 400g potatoes, mashed
- 2 spring inions (50g) finely chopped
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 4 rashers bacon, cooked and chopped

¼ cup (15g) dried wholemeal breadcrumbs

2 tsp canola oil

Instructions Prep time (30 min) Cook time (10 min)

1 Combine soup mix, cooled mashed potatoes, spring onions, parsley and bacon. If necessary chill for 30 minutes.
2 Shape into eight cakes, approximately 3cm in thickness, coat in breadcrumbs.
3 Heat oil in frying pan. Add potato cakes, cook
4 Serve with a garden salad