EATING *for* PERFORMANCE
ELITE

Eating for Performance (AFL)
AFL requires a lot of running, players must leap to mark or punch the ball, deal with tackling, quick changes in direction and handballing. A good player must have good foot skills, good decision making, be fast, strong and have a good aerobic capacity. This type of style requires both the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems. Therefore the correct nutritional intake is important for the player to be able to participate at their full potential.

This Nutrition Advice is aimed at those who compete and train at a high level. Elite players require individualised nutrition advice and guidance. This is important as some positions require different body weights and physiques.
Most players think that fuelling up the day before is all that is required, in order to play a good game of footy, however the daily demands of training require a steady, balanced diet throughout the season.

Carbohydrates
AFL football players require a diet in high in carbohydrates in order to face the demands of trainings and games. Carbohydrates provide glycogen for the muscles, this is your main energy source during trainings and games. AFL players should try and focus their carbohydrate meals on slow releasing glucose rich foods (low G.I) so the energy can be sustained over a longer period of time. Examples of low G.I foods include whole grains, oats, baked beans (depending on brand), and unripe banana. Medium to high G.I foods (faster release of glucose into the blood stream) are ok to eat prior to a game or training if it can be replenished throughout, e.g raisins, lollies, or sports gel (you would choose the most appropriate based on when you are consuming the meals). Basic guidelines suggest that if you are training at a high intensity for 1-3 hours per day you should be consuming 6-10g per kg of your body weight of carbohydrates per day.

Protein
Protein for an AFL player is a lot greater than the average person. AFL is a contact sport, giving rise in muscular damage, and as weight training is incorporated into an AFL players training regime, it is important to consume enough protein in order to repair and build the muscle. Proteins are also used as enzymes or transport vehicles. Examples of food high in protein include Eggs, Lean Beef, Low fat cheese, whole meal bread, and cooked pasta. Basic guidelines suggest that if you are playing football or powerful sports you should consume 1.4-1.7g per kg of your body weight of protein per day.

Fat
Fat is also an essential macronutrient that everybody requires in their diet. It is important for maintaining body weight and for periods of high growth and intense training. It is used as the final energy source; when you're glycogen (carbohydrate) stores have been depleted. The type of fat you consume is important. It is important to consume polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Examples of Monounsaturated and Polyunsaturated fats include salmon, tuna, nuts and avocados. Try to limit saturated fats in the diet as these can slow an athlete down and act as extra unnecessary weight. Examples of saturated fats include take aways, high fat dairy products, and fried foods.

Micronutrients
Micronutrients are also required in the diet, these are vitamins and minerals. If you are consuming a well-balanced diet it is likely you will be consuming enough micronutrients. The most important micronutrients include iron (especially in females), Sodium, and Potassium. Some athletes choose to take a multi vitamin, studies on the effectiveness of this are currently inconclusive.

Fluids
The amount of water you should drink a day is dependent on your activity level. AFL players should be well hydrated before, during and after training sessions and games, this is important to enhance performance. The best way to tell if you are hydrated is to make sure your urine is a clear colour (be aware that certain supplements for example Borocca can colour your urine and give you a false sense of dehydration).

Quick Tip
Caffeine is sometimes used 1 hour before a game to enhance performance. Individual response to caffeine may differ.

Example Foods (Carbohydrate Rich)

Here is a list of foods you can choose from that contain 50g of Carbohydrates. You can include these foods in your own meal examples for the day. Try to choose foods you are familiar with and foods that you enjoy. (These foods are to be consumed throughout the entire day).

Cereal	***Quantity***
Cornflakes	2 cups
Porriage with milk	1.3 cups
Pancakes	2 medium size
Canned spaghetti	1 large can
English muffin	2 full muffins
Fruit	
Bananas	2 medium
Large fruit (mango, pear, grapefruit)	2-3
Medium fruit (orange, apple, pear)	3-4
Vegetables	
Potato	1 very large potato or 3 small potatoes
Kumera	2.5 cups
Pumpkin and Peas	5 cups
Corn	2 cobs
Dairy Product	
Milk	1 litre
Natural yoghurt	700g
Creamed rice	1.5 cups
Flavoured milk	560ml
Sugar and confectionary	
Jam	3 Tbsp
Honey	3 Tbsp
Mixed dishes	
Lasagne	400g
Fried rice	1.3 cups
Drinks	
Fruit juice (unsweetened)	600ml
Fruit smoothie	250ml - 300ml
Sports foods	
Sport drink	700ml
Sport gel	2 sachets

Example Foods (Protein Rich)

Here is a list of foods you can choose from that contain 10g of Protein. You can include these foods in your own meal examples for the day. Try to choose foods you are familiar with and foods that you enjoy. (These foods are to be consumed throughout the entire day).

Animal foods	*Plant foods*
2 small eggs	4 slices of wholemeal bread
70g cottage cheese	3 cups of whole grain cereal
1 cup low fat milk	2 cups cooked pasta
35g lean beef or pork	3 cups of cooked rice
50g grilled fish	200g baked beans
50g canned tuna	120g tofu
1.5 slices reduced fat cheese	300ml soy milk

Sample meal plan for an 80kg AFL player on a moderate/high intensity training day of 1-3 hours.

Estimated carbohydrates requirements a day 8*80=640g Carbohydrates per day (as per guidelines above).
Estimated protein requirements a day 1.7*80=136g Protein per day (as per guidelines above).

Example one (please note quantities may vary)

Breakfast

2 Whole grain toast with 2 poached eggs, 1 can baked beans, a glass of fruit juice

Mid-morning

4 whole grain crackers and a large can of tuna

Lunch

Wrap filled with hummus, lean meat, egg and salad and a piece of fruit

Pre training

2 whole grain pieces of toast with jam, or milo with a banana or a smoothie

Post training

Replace 150% of water loss. 1 ripe Banana, and a milk based smoothie.

Dinner

Lean meat or chicken, vegetables with pasta and a tomato based sauce.

Supper

Fresh fruit and low fat yoghurt

Note: Make sure you are consuming water throughout the day