



**The Rugby League  
Coach Education Programme**

**The Think Coaching E-Link**

**Issue 08**



## Welcome to Issue 08 – Diet & Nutrition

This issue looks at the important area of diet and nutrition. It's a subject you that in general you can't get away from, be it the latest diet to lose weight or issues that surround obesity. As rugby league coaches we need to understand it's importance for the players in our charge and we need to be able to give them the correct guidelines and information.

In this issue we look at two relatively short articles that give some general advice and principles. Future issues will look in greater detail and will cover areas such as hydration and the use of supplements.

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# Nutrition For “Peak Performance”

By Judy Bauer  
B Sc, Grad Dip Nutr & Diet, MHIth Sc, MDAA

Everyone is looking for the edge in their sport and fitness - that little bit extra will take them comfortably to the end of the game. Whether you are playing State of Origin or the local fixture, you can have one of the easiest edges there is through eating great food. What you eat and drink significantly influences your performance. Many players think that improving their diet a week or two before an important match is enough, but it's really the year round diet that is most important. An adequate diet in terms of quality and quantity before, during and after exercise will maximize performance. Nutrition is the bridge between your ability and your maximal performance.

For most sports people the ideal eating plan is very high in carbohydrate (60-70% of total kilojoules), moderate in protein and low fat. Your muscles and liver store carbohydrate as glycogen and if you don't have enough glycogen stored, you simply won't be able to play well, either in training or during the game. With a high carbohydrate eating plan you'll train to your max, last longer, perform better and recover quicker.

Tips for packing in the carbohydrate.

1. Start the day with a great breakfast. A simple bowl of breakfast cereal topped with milk served with fresh fruit is a high nutrient way to start the day.
2. Snacks are essential for all players. The right snacks will top up glycogen levels before and after training or a game, help you control your body weight and boost performance. Quick convenient snacks include breakfast cereals and bars, dried fruit, muesli bars, fruit, muffins, yoghurt, rice and pasta.

3. Make carbohydrates the focus of each meal. Fill up on plenty of bread, pasta, rice, couscous, noodles or potatoes. At your main meal your plate should contain at least half carbohydrate containing foods.

4. For maximum glycogen synthesis consume carbohydrate within 10-15 minutes after your training session or game and continue with a high carbohydrate diet for the next 24 hours. The best snacks in the immediate replenishment phase are quick acting carbohydrates such as sports drinks, cereals, honey sandwiches, jelly beans, creamed rice and watermelon.

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# Nutrition For Recovery

By Judy Bauer  
B Sc, Grad Dip Nutr & Diet, MHLth Sc, MDAA

After training or a game, your glycogen stores and body fluids will be depleted. Its best to start topping them up immediately. Start eating and drinking carbohydrate within 15 minutes of exercising and you'll refuel your glycogen stores efficiently. Muscle glycogen is generally replaced at about 5% per hour so it can take many hours to replace all the glycogen used during a game or heavy training session. There is a window of opportunity in the first two hours after exercising as carbohydrate can be converted to glycogen faster than normal during this time. So it is essential that you start your refueling as soon as possible after your exercise session. If you wait until you get home and cook a meal then you may miss out on replenishing your glycogen stores to their maximum.

To work out your immediate carbohydrate needs, you require about 1 gram of carbohydrate per kilogram body weight. So if you weigh 75kg, you need 75 grams of carbohydrate. The best carbohydrate sources for immediate recovery to boost blood sugar levels quickly can be carried in your training bag. Carbohydrate rich liquids fit the bill perfectly as they top up carbohydrate and fluid in one hit. Each of the following items contain about 50 grams of carbohydrate:

- 700ml sports drink
- 700ml cordial
- 300ml Lucozade
- 8 tablespoons Sustagen sport mixed with water
- 420ml juice
- 1 can Exceed Sports Nutritional Supplement

If your appetite feels fine then follow through with some high carbohydrate foods such as bread, pasta, rice, vegetables (potato, corn, sweet potato) and fruit. Providing you eat enough carbohydrate foods you will top up your glycogen stores within 24 hours and be ready for your next training session or game.

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The Rugby League Coaching Magazine website has a wide variety of products that are useful for coaches. They can be contact via this link <http://www.rlcm.com.au/home.htm>

Have the issues raised in these articles been of any use to you?

Would you like to see further articles on the subject?

Drop us a line at [haydn.walker@rfl.uk.com](mailto:haydn.walker@rfl.uk.com)

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