



Cricket

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About Cricket

Cricket is played competitively in summer and while it is a game of skill, it also involves extended periods of time spent playing, often in very challenging, hot conditions.

Teams are made up of batsmen and bowlers, a wicket keeper and possibly some all-rounders. Theoretically, all team members get to bat and field, while only the specialist bowlers and all-rounders are required to bowl. Competition is structured as either:

- Twenty20 fixtures, which involve one innings (maximum 20 overs) per side
- Limited over (one-day) games, which also involve one innings (maximum 50 overs) per side, or;
- 4-5 day games (Test matches) which involve 2 innings per side.

For today's elite level cricketers, training is demanding like most elite level sports.

Training diet

Elite cricketers can have a busy training schedule with multiple sessions throughout the day. The intensity of sessions can range from low to very high, depending on the training goals of that session. Cricketers therefore need to focus on nutrient-dense foods such as cereals, fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meat/poultry/fish or vegetarian alternatives. The timing of meals also needs to be well planned to coincide with recovery between sessions. And on heavier training days, remember to include extra snacks to fuel the extra training load.

Cricket can involve long hours of low intensity activity and players can often find themselves gaining unwanted weight, particularly when enjoying the social aspects of cricket. Cricketers wanting to lose body fat need to assess their training load and may need to include extra aerobic exercise in addition to scheduled training sessions. Dietary intake also needs to be considered as fat and alcohol intakes are common nutrition issues in cricket that need to be addressed.

Fluid needs

Fluid needs vary depending on your role in the team (e.g. batting, bowling), playing style and weather conditions. Keeping track of individual fluid losses is important as even relatively small fluid losses (~2% body weight) can impair bowling accuracy in skilled cricket players, impair concentration and performance in general, as the body is less able to cool itself as efficiently. Severe fluid losses can also be extremely dangerous if good hydration practices are not in place.

Training is the best time to establish good hydration habits and monitor changes in day-to-day fluid losses under different conditions. Players should weigh themselves before and after innings (in a minimum of clothing, toweled off) to estimate fluid losses. For every 1 kg lost, it is generally assumed that this represents 1 L of fluid lost. Better accuracy of fluid losses can be achieved by monitoring the amount of fluid and food (in grams) consumed, and any toilet stops in between weighs. (See below)

Sweat loss (ml) = weight change over the session (g) + weight of fluid/food consumed (g) – weight change due to a toilet stop (g)

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Warm-up, drinks and meal breaks provide good opportunities to drink fluid during a match, and take advantage of opportunities to drink from the side-line during over changes, the fall of wickets and, of course, when your team is batting and not on the field.

It is difficult to drink at a rate that replaces all sweat losses that occur during the game so try to drink at a rate that is comfortable and keeps pace with sweat losses as much as possible. Have your own drink bottles – this practice is hygienic and also allows you to keep track of how much you have consumed over the match.

Be wary of drinking too much (exceeding your sweat rate) that you gain body mass over a match. It can not only lead to gastrointestinal discomfort, but at extremes, it can also cause a medical problem called hyponatraemia, where blood sodium concentrations fall to a dangerous level.

Sports drinks can also be useful to provide fuel as well as fluid during matches and training. Research shows that carbohydrate intake may enhance performance during matches by increasing endurance and delaying the onset of fatigue. The bottom line is that, in comparison to water, sports drinks may help you to perform for longer and at a higher intensity for the duration of the match, and maintain skills and decision-making capability at a maximal level.

What should I eat before training/competition?

Cricketers do not know whether they will be batting or bowling on the first day of a match until approximately 45 minutes prior to start time. As a result, they need to prepare for a match assuming they will be involved in their capacity on the first day. Pre-game hydration is extremely important to ensure cricketers begin the match in a well hydrated state.

When fuelling up before a game, eat a larger meal 2-4 hours prior to when you are likely to play, to allow time for your stomach to empty. Then, top up 1-2 hours before you are likely to play with a high carbohydrate snack, e.g. a jam sandwich or a muesli bar and a banana or even a liquid meal e.g. Sustagen Sport®. This is also good to do between sessions and whilst waiting to play. Keep these snacks low in fat - fat slows food emptying from the stomach which can lead to stomach upsets on the field.

Eat enough food to feel comfortable (not overfull) and experiment with a variety of foods in training to determine those which feel most comfortable before a match. Try to include nutritious carbohydrate rich foods - some players may find it useful to include low glycaemic index foods for prolonged energy levels (e.g. baked beans, multigrain bread, pasta, porridge, oranges) and make sure that fluids accompany these meals and snacks (e.g. water, sports drinks, juice).

What should I eat during training/competition?

Players should take advantage of the breaks between play to top up fuel and fluid stores. High carbohydrate, low fat foods and fluids are the preferred choices although food selection will be up to the individual.

Some good choices include:

- low fat smoothies
- low fat yoghurt or ice cream
- jelly and fruit OR fruit salad
- a banana sandwich
- muffins or crumpets with jam/honey
- pasta or rice with plain sauce.

At drinks and meal breaks, replacing fluid losses with a sports drink and water needs to be a priority.

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What about recovery?

Ingesting a snack containing carbohydrate and protein within about 15 - 20 minutes after strenuous exercise can maximise the muscles ability to recover.

It is important to plan for after long sessions of play, particularly when a player has been required to bowl many overs or make many runs. Organise to have carbohydrate-rich foods and fluids as soon as practical after coming off the ground is a priority.

Ideally, aim for 50-100g of carbohydrate immediately after finishing training or a match (see suggestions below). High glycaemic index (GI) carbohydrates can offer even greater benefits as sugars are digested and delivered quickly to depleted muscles (see Fact Sheet on [Glycaemic Index](#) for more information).

Recovery foods may include smoothies, sports drink, icy poles, muesli bars, sandwiches, soups and fruit.

This should be followed up by a nutritious meal containing both carbohydrate and protein with 3-4 hours post match.

Other nutrition issues

- The nutrition needs of individuals within a cricket team can vary considerably. Fast bowlers often have higher energy needs than batsmen and may have more difficulty maintaining a higher body weight.
- There can also be a lot of sitting and waiting in cricket which predisposes some players to excess weight and body fat levels, particularly if they are prone to boredom eating or consuming large quantities of soft drink.

- It is very important to be prepared on match days and ensure that nutritious and appropriate foods and fluids are available for snacks and meals throughout the day.
- **Alcohol:** There has historically been a strong association between cricket and alcohol (in particular beer). Cricket players at the elite level now recognise that excessive alcohol intake will impair performance and in particular their recovery between games. For this reason they restrict their intake of alcoholic beverages before and between games, and despite popular media interpretation, they also moderate their alcohol intake after matches. At any level of cricket, alcohol consumption close to a match should be avoided. At other times, players are encouraged to use alcohol in moderation only after meeting recovery goals (i.e. rehydration and refueling) and to avoid 'binge drinking' situations.
- A multivitamin/mineral supplement may be indicated when travelling overseas to environments with unfamiliar foods and fluids, and/or extreme environmental conditions.
- To date there are no specific dietary supplements which have been proven to improve sporting performance in cricket players.

How do I get involved?

Click here for information about clubs all over the country
http://www.ants.com.au/cricket_clubs.htm

Author: Lorna Garden, Sports Dietitian