

Sports Nutrition

Fuelling Fact or Fiction

Is it ok to eat carbs after 3pm?

The Australian diet is very rich in carbohydrates and as a result, many of us eat more than we need, which can lead to unwanted weight gain because this “fuel” is not being used for what it was intended. Reducing portion sizes of carbohydrate foods can be appropriate for those trying to lose weight, however, for athletes (recreational or elite) it is recommended to have some carbohydrates later in the day for recovery. This does not mean oversized serves of pasta or rice every night (unless you are an ultra-endurance athlete!), but nutrient-rich carbohydrates, such as sweet potato, corn and wholegrain breads/cereals are encouraged. The volume of these are individual, but carbohydrates (as part of a balanced meal) will aid recovery for the next day.

Are high protein diets best for muscle mass gain?

For those working hard at building muscle mass, it is well-established that protein is essential to provide the ingredients for muscle development. But the bodybuilding “climate” has to be right! Building and repairing muscles is an energy-expensive task, so adequate total energy (kilojoules) is just as important. If focusing solely on protein, other nutrients can also be missed, like carbohydrates, which are essential for fuelling existing muscles as well as contributing to total energy needs. The current recommendation for protein for muscle mass gain is up to 2g/kg/day, but this will vary depending on individual needs.

No breakfast before morning workout to burn more fat?

This is a question that comes up time and time again, especially for those wanting to lose weight. Exercising in a fasted state (i.e; no breakfast) may lead to more fat burned as a fuel for exercise, but fatigue can set in early and poor training outcomes may result. So a small snack before is ideal for fuel and more energy to exercise, which may lead to greater kilojoules burned in the long run.

Are sports drinks only necessary for endurance athletes?

It is a myth that sport drinks are only for endurance athletes. Sports drinks also benefit people involved in stop-go sports and exercise sessions of about 60 to 90 minutes. In addition, a study of athletes exercising hard for less than 60 minutes said that the exercise “felt much easier” when they drank sports drinks rather than just water and there is evidence that sweet-tasting fluids have positive influences on central (psychological) fatigue as much as peripheral (muscular) fatigue. We know that as little as 1-2% dehydration reduces endurance, causing workouts to feel much harder. A sports drink helps to prevent dehydration, and thus can enhance performance. However, sports drinks do provide extra kilojoules and this should be considered with regard to weight management.

Sports nutrition is an evolving science—Sports Dietitians dedicate their careers to being the experts in nutrition for active people, and their Career Development Pathway ensures that professional development is maintained. For further information on sports nutrition go to www.sportsdietitians.com.au as your first stop for credible nutrition information.