



TOP 5 Performance Nutrition Tips to Work on

While You Are on the CV Break

Page Love, MS, RDN, CSSD

Worried about getting off track with this unplanned time away from competitive sport play? During this “Corona Virus off season” take advantage of this time to work on basic sport nutrition training diet goals that can enhance your return to sport training. Develop obtainable and realistic behavioral goals and use these basic sport nutrition guidelines to provide a priority list for your training diet:

1. Improve your hydration

The most common sports nutrition error is not hydrating fully when you are not in the daily grind of being on court or field in hot and humid conditions. So, get a head start on one of the most common causes for poor performance — not to mention one of the main causes of heat illness. Work on your off-court/field hydration to prepare your body for your return to competitive play. Aim for at least two liters off court three liters off court/field. These beverages can include water, milk, juice, smoothies, and decaffeinated coffee or tea. Don’t forget to hydrate well closer to practice time by slowly sipping on one liter of water for the last two to three hours before playtime or practice. And, don’t forget to check your urine color. Lighter “lemonade” tints to urine are the standard for being well-hydrated.

2. Get serious about pre-fueling for improved performance

Many athletes rush to practices without appropriate fueling especially for those morning practices. A pre-practice/game performance meal or snack can determine how well your game or practice performance ends up, which is vital in reaching a new performance peak. Being consistent and timely, as well as choosing the right performance food, is critical. Enjoy a meal or snack high in carbohydrates, especially a complex carbohydrate, such as a healthy oatmeal or breakfast potatoes, or if a mid morning time, consider a higher carbohydrate energy bar, containing at least 30 gms of carbohydrate and lower protein content, ideally 10 gms or less as a healthy and quick pre-fueling choice.

3. Recovery snacks are essential for rebuilding muscle and allowing you to peak perform continuously day after day

Post-training snacks steady your hunger and help re-build muscle. Snacks higher in protein are key. Chocolate milk is an easy go-to; a popular brand to consider is Fairlife milk or soy milk or protein

fortified almond milk, all being lactose free. You also can add greek yogurt to home-made recovery smoothies to benefit from a variety of food group nutrients such as anti-inflammatory fruits and vegetables and dairy which will help you to meet your calcium and Vitamin D needs. Overall aim is to get 15-25 grams of protein within 30-45 minutes after play.

4. Work on basic sport nutrition balance

Try to make every meal complete with at least three of the major food groups that supply key macronutrients, particularly sources of both carbohydrate and protein. Having a healthy balance of a variety of foods throughout the day can help maintain energy and build muscle to help you keep your training goals. Enjoy a variety of dairy products, fruit, and veggies during meals and snacks; focus on having a protein, carbohydrate, and fat source at every meal. This simple concept can help you feel full of energy for your next practice or match. Simple examples of sport performance meals to consider are:

- Overnight oats with yogurt and colorful fruit, or egg wraps/sandwiches with veggies for breakfast
- Whole grain wraps with lean luncheon meat or tuna with lettuce and tomato, or a bowl meal that contains whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, or legumes over a bed of lettuce and raw veggies with a lean meat toppings such as grilled chicken or salmon for lunch
- Lean grilled or roasted meats, including more fish options, loin cuts of red meat, or poultry choices combined with at least two colorful vegetables filling half of your plate and smaller portion of grains — and experiment with new choices in the New Year such as farro or lentil pastas.

***Tips in points 3 and 4 are critically important to pump up your immune system to help your body resist the virus. Eating more bright colored fruits and vegetables containing important antioxidant vitamins including Vit A and C help your body resist respiratory infections. Additionally consuming adequate Vit D during this time is also an immune builder, studies show adequate Vit D especially in natural dairy products, can help your body fight influenza symptoms!**

5. Explore new sport foods during this off time

Explore new products such as sport beverages, electrolyte gels, chews, on-court snacks, and electrolyte tablets. Try different brands and flavors to see what helps your performance the most. Now is the perfect time to try these out so that when you return to competitive play, you will know what is working best in your gut and with your energy levels. There may be an anxiety or nervous elements to tournament days that may throw off your gastro-intestinal tract, so knowing what works for your performance ahead of time is key. Here are some examples of popular science-based products that you may want to experiment with during this time:

- Consider **Liquid IV** if you have had frequent muscle cramps. This is similar to Pedialyte and comes in handy sachets to add to .5-liter bottles to better meet your sodium losses. This the ideal sodium replacement for those heavy sweaters!
- **Gu or Clif Shot gels or chews** — These can be used at change over, especially the second hour of play during long practices or matches, to help you better meet your electrolyte needs in an alternative form and help with energy boosts in an easily digestible form.
- **Honey Stinger waffles** and **Pro Bar Bites** are both higher carbohydrate, but portable energy options. They may be ideal when you are craving more and needing more than a sport beverage, chew, or gel when you are training for longer durations or at higher intensities.
- **Nuun Electrolyte tablets** — These are a great option for a lower carbohydrate, moderate electrolyte option for lower-temperature electrolyte needs on the court. These also are great for general use during day hydration to better meet your electrolyte needs.

Page Love is an avid tennis competitor and former NCAA Division 1 college player and sport dietitian in private practice in the Atlanta area and also a consultant to both the ATP and WTA professional tennis tours. She is also member of the USTA Sport Science Committee. She currently conducts both in person and virtual sessions with both local and distance athletes. You can find her at nutrifitga.com or 770-395-7331.