

TENNIS NUTRITION FOR PERFORMANCE



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ATHLETICA**

A lot of tennis players that see us at Precision Athletica are young high school aged tennis players with high training loads and high energy requirements to support their performance and recovery.

All parents of tennis players will agree that it can be difficult to know how to fuel them well across the day. Establishing high performance habits early in life will help set young tennis players up with healthy habits they can maintain for life. Focusing on good nutrition habits on a day to day basis also makes it easier on match days to fuel appropriately for competition.

If you need ideas for how to fuel well on a day to day basis, check out our other informative factsheets. This factsheet will focus on match day nutrition habits.

1. Plan & prepare beforehand

Most tennis venues will have a canteen that sells food and drinks, however often these aren't ideal options for fuelling between matches. When travelling for competition, you will need to do the research accommodation (if staying elsewhere), or your food options on the drive to assess how much food you'll need to have packed yourself. It is better to be over-prepared than under-prepared and end up with no food to eat between matches. If you know the canteen options at the venue

aren't going to be ideal, make sure to pack a meal, snacks and plenty of fluids to fuel up between matches

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PLAN & PREPARE BEFOREHAND
What food is available and what do you need to pack?

HYDRATION
Sip on fluids+ electrolytes every changeover

CAFFEINE
3-5mg caffeine/kg body weight before and during match play.
Dependent on tolerance, not recommended <18 years

PRACTICE!
Trial competition day nutrition strategies in training first

CARBOHYDRATES
If your match is >2 hours consider snacks to top up energy levels.
Aim for 30-60g carbohydrate/hour of match play



2. Practice your nutrition and hydration plan in training first

When you watch professional tennis players, you often see that they have a multitude of options available with them on the court from different drinks to snacks such as bananas or sports bars.

These are high performance habits that professional tennis players have developed over time – they know how much carbohydrate and fluid their body will need, and come to every competition prepared with the options they'll need to fuel their body. If you turn up to your match and hope to replicate their plans, you might find that it won't sit well in your stomach. If you aren't used to eating a snack or having a high amount of fluids during a match, your gut will not necessarily be able to tolerate this and might result in nausea or cramping.

To prevent this happening, focus on training your gut before a tournament. Practice your nutrition and hydration plan in training more than twice in the lead up to competition, so you can figure out the best food and fluid options for you, and know how much you'll need.

3. Fuel with carbohydrates

If you know your match will be >2 hours, consider topping up energy levels with carbohydrates. The goal is to aim for 30-60g of carbohydrate per hour of exercise. This could be in the form of sports drinks, banana or sports bars.

When you are playing a tournament, you might have more time to eat between matches but still need something that is easy to digest and won't cause gastrointestinal issues. Try plain vegemite or peanut butter sandwiches, rice cakes with cheese, plain pasta or white rice dishes.

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4. Caffeine is optional

Caffeine is optional, but can have great performance benefits when used correctly. Caffeine is not routinely recommended for tennis players under 18 years of age due to poorer tolerance and metabolism, particularly pre-workout supplements. Otherwise, 1-3mg caffeine/kg body weight can be useful before and during match play to assist with delaying fatigue and boosting performance. Speak to a Sports Dietitian for an individualised caffeine plan when it comes to caffeine.

5. Focus on hydration!

Tennis is often played in hot weather, and you might be out in the sun for hours at a time. It's important to ensure your body is well hydrated in these circumstances to prevent the side effects and symptoms of dehydration.

Dehydration can have a huge impact on performance – decreased power output, speed and endurance. The focus on hydration begins during the week by making sure you are hydrating your body adequately on a day to day basis and developing this into a habit. The day before, you should be monitoring your urine colour using a urine chart as a loose assessment of your hydration status. On the day, continue sipping on water throughout and consider adding electrolytes depending on the weather and your individual sweat rate.

Electrolyte drinks help to replace electrolytes lost through sweat, help absorb water in the body, and also help to increase thirst due to the sodium which will prompt you to drink more water. Thirst is not the best indicator of your fluid requirements, especially during exercise. It is important to sip water throughout the day. In summer, cool water is especially useful as it can also be used to help cool you down which can slow down sweating and fluid losses too.

Logistics and timing make it difficult to plan nutrition and hydration strategies for tennis players. Focus on building good habits throughout the week and this will make match days easier. For an individual plan, contact **Precision Athletica Sports Dietitian - Kelsey Hutton**.