

## NUTRITION FOR CRICKET

Cricket is a sport that requires skill, speed and endurance depending on the player specialty and often involves playing in challenging hot conditions for extended periods. All team members will field and may bat, however only the specialist bowlers and all-rounders may be called on to bowl.

### Training

Although cricket is primarily a summer sport, pre-season training typically starts in the cooler winter and spring months of the year. The number of training sessions per week varies depending on the level of the athlete with younger athletes training ~1-2 days per week (if at all) while at a senior elite level, athletes may train 5-6 days per week, usually more than once per day. Training sessions involved skill based tasks, fitness activities as well as weight training. Professional and elite development players often continue to follow a training plan over the off-season break.

### Competition

Cricket is primarily a summer sport, with the season spanning October to April in Australia however at the international level, cricketers tour nearly all year round. During the Australian winter, many elite players participate in the cricket tournaments of countries in the northern hemisphere (for example, County Cricket in England or the Indian Premier League). In Australia, district/club cricket is played on weekends and may be in the form of 1 or 2-day fixtures. At the state level, male cricketers play in a number of competition series including 4-day matches, 1-day matches and T20 matches. The international cricket season in Australia involves one-day fixtures, multiple test series and a T20 competition. Players usually return to play in their state competition when not required for international commitments. Female cricketers compete in limited overs and T20 matches at a state level and compete internationally in each of the 3 forms of the sport. Players may be involved in all types of competition, however the different skill sets required in each of the different forms of cricket increasingly dictates that at an international level players are often specialists in a specific form of the sport.

The physical requirements of cricket vary with the format of the match and the player's position in the team. For example, a batsman may bat in the heat all day or may get out on the first ball and sit in the pavilion for the day's play. A bowler could bowl as many as 30 overs in a day's play, or could sit around for 2 days whilst his teammates bat. Test matches are played during the day (usually 11am - 6pm). Limited-over matches are played over 6 hours during the day or night, while T20 matches are played as either day or night fixtures, and usually last approximately 3 hours. Test cricket can involve long hours of low intensity activity interspersed with very high intensity activities (running between wickets, running to field a ball, bowling) while T20 cricket is emerging as a game of strength, skill and speed, dominated by short bursts of running.

## Common Nutrition Issues

### Training Nutrition

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. Cricketers therefore need to base their intake on a balance of nutrient-dense foods such as cereals, fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, lean meat/poultry/fish or vegetarian alternatives. Food intake needs to be well timed to help promote recovery between sessions. Intake needs to be adjusted to match the activity level of each day with extra snacks being included around training on heavier days.

### Match Day Nutrition

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. Consequently, they need to prepare for a match assuming they will be involved in their capacity on the first day. It is important for the players to begin the match appropriately hydrated given the often hot conditions and limited opportunities to drink fluids over the match. When the team does not provide the pre-match meal, players need to be planned and proactive in eating before competition and packing suitable snack options as the facilities at playing fields may not have appropriate options available. Ideally, the pre-match meal should include be based around quality carbohydrates such as cereal, yoghurt, sandwiches, fruit, pasta, etc. The timing of the meal can be difficult; especially when the team bats first and players have no idea when they will be required to participate. In general, players should eat 2-4 hours before the match begins and include snacks such as fruit, cereal bars, yoghurt and sandwiches whilst waiting to bat.

Test and limited over matches usually include breaks for lunch and tea. Depending on the level of competition, meals may be formally catered, provided by the social club, assembled by asking players to 'bring a plate' or consist of individual packed lunches. The nutritional quality of meals at the elite level is generally good, however occasionally high-fat, lower-carbohydrate foods such as cold cuts, fried foods and cakes can still feature. Ideally, meals consumed during a cricket match should provide carbohydrate to keep fuel stores topped up, be low in fat and easy to digest. Good examples include fresh or toasted sandwiches and rolls with lean meat and salad, tomato based pasta dishes, sushi, fruit salad, yoghurt, fruit and smoothies. *See competition and training factsheets for more details.*

### Hydration

Drink breaks are generally scheduled every hour, however at some lower levels of cricket this could be less frequent. Avoiding dehydration is an important issue, and cricketers should aim to use drinks breaks as an opportunity to replace sweat losses. For active players such as batsmen, bowlers (especially fast bowlers) and the wicket keeper, additional drinks may be required and can be provided on the boundary line or brought onto the field by the 12th man

at the change of overs or when a batsman is given out. If players do not adequately replace fluid losses at the end of the day they can carry fluid deficits into the next days' play.

## Recovery

In multi-day matches, optimising recovery is an important goal. At the end of the day's play, players need to replace fluid and electrolytes and consume a snack or meal containing carbohydrate and good quality protein. Players, especially those who have undertaken a heavy workload during the match, should consume a meal such as lean chicken and salad wraps, toasted ham, low fat cheese and tomato sandwiches, pasta with meat based sauce or snacks such as yoghurt, tetra pack milk drinks, smoothies, dried fruit and nut bars to help meet carbohydrate, protein and fluid goals and promote recovery. Other fluids such as sports drink, electrolyte replacements (e.g. Hydralyte™) and water can also help to replace sweat losses. *See recovery factsheet for more details.*

## Body Composition

Cricket can involve long hours of low intensity activity, particularly on days when players are in the pavilion for the majority or all of the day's play. During the competition season, players can often find themselves gaining unwanted body fat if they don't adjust their energy intake to their energy output on a daily basis, especially on match days. It's not uncommon for players to graze on food over the days' play for reasons other than hunger (e.g. boredom, to help pass the time, "just in case"). Cricketers wanting to lose body fat need to assess their training load and energy intake. Additional conditioning sessions may need to be included around training to help manage body fat levels.

Younger athletes who often have busy lifestyles, train for more than one team (e.g. club and school) or play more than one sport can often struggle to eat enough for growth and development of lean mass. These athletes need to be especially proactive in increasing energy intakes to meet training loads and energy needs. Adding in extra good quality snacks such as yoghurt, fruit, sandwiches or wholegrain cereal bars around training can help to meet these increased nutrition needs.

## Travel

At the international and state level players can be required to be away from home for significant blocks of time. During these travel periods it can be difficult for players to access appropriate and preferred food options. This can mean that players may not appropriately fuel and recover before and after matches. There are also instances where food and water safety may be a concern. Careful planning needs to take place before travel periods to ensure nutrition goals are met while on the road.

*This fact sheet is based on National team athletes and is therefore specific to these athletes. Written by AIS Sports Nutrition, last updated December 2013. © Australian Sports Commission.*