

Nutrition For Hockey Players

Hockey Nutrition

From The Book "Game Winning Nutrition"

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3 Game Winning Nutrition Tips

Think of hockey players as high-performance automobiles and food as the fuel that drives their performance. Far too often, players run out of gas during a game after having lunch at a fast-food restaurant or forgetting to eat breakfast. This would be like putting diesel fuel in your tank instead of regular gas or trying to drive on empty. You can be the most skilled player in the world, but if you aren't putting the right fuel into your tank, you won't have the energy to compete at the highest level. In order for players perform their best day in and day out, they need to take in premium fuel.

Here are 3 game-winning nutrition tips for hockey players:

1) Pre-Game Tip = Prepare

Players should never step on the ice feeling hungry. You need to time your pre-game meal so that most of the food is out of the stomach and broken down by the body by the time you hit the ice. If the game is 3 hours away, you can have a larger meal that is 75% carbohydrates (ie. rice, pasta, vegetables, fruit etc.) and 25% protein (ie. chicken, eggs, beans etc.). The closer you get to game time, the smaller and "lighter" the meal should be, meaning that you want to have less fat and protein and a focus more on carbohydrates. If you have an early morning practice or game, at least grab a piece of fruit or granola bar so that you have some fuel in the tank before you hit the ice. The key is to make sure that you have fuel in the tank and it is of the highest quality possible.

2) In-Game Tip = Hydrate

Proper hydration is the most important nutritional strategy an player can use. If you are thirsty, it is too late! The thirst sensation kicks in after you have lost 1 to 2 liters of water. This means that you are already dehydrated and your performance can be decreased by 15 to 20%. The solution? Always carry a water bottle with you and sip from it all day long - not just when you are at the rink.

A Note about Sports Drinks: It is suggested that sports drinks with electrolytes should be consumed when athletes are participating in an intense activity lasting more than 60 minutes. Therefore, for the majority of young hockey players, sports drinks are not necessary. On the other hand, a highly competitive hockey player, who is bantam age or older, may benefit from these specialty drinks for "recovery purposes" because they are so convenient and can be purchased anywhere. Instead of having sports drinks BEFORE a practice or game, Have these drinks during a tough practice or immediately after a tough game instead of beforehand since their high sugar content may lead to a sugar "crash".

3) Post-Game = Recover

Immediately after a player steps off the ice, they have a 30 minute window where their body is at a heightened state to recover and they need to start rehydrating and refueling. One of the best recovery drinks a player can have is 1% chocolate milk. It has the simple sugars needed to start replenishing energy stores and the protein needed to start repairing tired muscles. By drinking chocolate milk (as well as lots of water), players will be well on their way to recovering from their on-ice session and getting ready for the next one.

Premium hockey performance requires proper training, great coaching and the right equipment. But in order for athletes to perform their best day in and day out, they need to make sure that they are taking in the best fuel possible through their nutrition.