

FACT SHEET TOUCH FOOTBALL

ABOUT TOUCH FOOTBALL

Touch Football is a sport played widely in Australia, both recreationally and competitively. Competitions are run year round with matches being played over two 20-minute halves separated by a five-minute interval. Touch football tournaments may require players to play up to three to four games in a single day.

Similar to other forms of rugby, while running forwards the ball has to be passed backward and the aim is to place the ball in the touchdown zone. The game requires intermittent short sprints as well as agility, ball handling skills and good knowledge of tactical moves. Unlike rugby union and rugby league, defending players do not tackle but only have to “touch” the ball carrier. After a team incurs six “touches” while attacking the ball is turned over to the opposition. Teams are comprised of up to 14 players with 6 on the field at any one time. Player substitutions are unlimited throughout the game.

TRAINING DIET

During seasonal competitions, games are played at least once a week, with several training sessions per week. Therefore refuelling of fluid and carbohydrate is essential to be optimally prepared to maximise performance. The training diet should be a balanced diet, rich in carbohydrates and low in fat and includes plenty of fluids. See the Eating Before Sport factsheet for more information.

FLUID NEEDS

The fluid needs of players during training and games can be high because of the high intensity “stop and go” style of the game. Multiple games on competition days also increase the risk of dehydration as a fluid deficit from one match can be carried into the next. Dehydration can negatively affect exercise ability, skill execution and decision making and therefore, performance. Starting the match well hydrated is essential but here (are some other tips to stay hydrated during a match:

- Make the most of opportunities during substitutions and half time intervals to have a drink.
- In most games water is an appropriate fluid choice. However, sports drink may provide valuable carbohydrate to improve performance and delay fatigue if playing multiple games in a day.
- Athletes should remember that during summer competitions, fluid losses are greater and deserve special attention.

EATING BEFORE COMPETITION

The pre-match meal should be eaten 2-4 hours prior to play. It should be high in carbohydrate and low in fat. To avoid stomach upset, foods low in fibre and fat may be preferred. It is important to ensure the meal is well planned and uses familiar foods and fluids. Suitable options include:

- Breakfast cereal + low fat milk
- Pikelets with banana and honey + glass of juice
- Fruit salad + low fat yoghurt
- English muffin or crumpet with jam/honey
- Sandwich/roll + salad + lean meat/cheese

Athletes should practice eating pre-match meals and snacks before heavy training sessions to determine their preferred options. Athletes who struggle with pre-match nerves or can't compete with a 'heavy' stomach may find liquid carbohydrates (e.g. meal replacement drink, juice, low fat milk, sports drink) easier to manage. Allowing more time between the main meal and start of the match can also help to increase stomach comfort. Depending on the how long before the game the main meal was, athletes may also need to top up fuel supplies with a light snack such as a jam sandwich, muesli bar or fruit.

EATING AND DRINKING DURING COMPETITION?

As the game lasts less than an hour, eating in the half-time break is not necessary. If the training diet and pre-event meal are carbohydrate based, this should fuel the player sufficiently throughout the game. Hydration is important during a game. At half time, during breaks in play and when on the interchange bench, players should sip from a drink bottle to keep fluid intake up.

If playing multiple games in one day, athletes will need to eat between games. Athletes should not rely on the venue to have good choices available! Go to the ground prepared with snacks for in between matches. Some suggestions for portable snacks to eat between matches include:

- Fresh or tinned fruit
- Muesli bars
- Trail mix with dried fruit/nuts/seeds
- Sandwich with honey/jam/ banana
- Creamed rice tins
- Crackers or rice crackers
- Low-fat fruit muffins
- English muffins/crumpets with jam/honey



FACT SHEET TOUCH FOOTBALL

RECOVERY

It is important to recover with a meal or snack containing carbohydrate to replace muscle glycogen stores; protein to speed up muscle repair and fluid to replace sweat losses. This is most important in tournament settings with a number of games over several days in close succession. Ideally a recovery meal or snack should be consumed within 30-60 minutes of finishing training or competition.

Examples of recovery snacks that include carbohydrate, protein and fluid are:

- Low fat yoghurt + 600ml sports drink
- Low fat fruit smoothie
- Ham sandwich + banana + water
- 600ml reduced fat flavoured milk

OTHER NUTRITION TIPS

- Players need to be prepared and take their own food to the competition venue, especially during tournament play, as appropriate choices may not be available at the venue.
- Players should carry individual water bottles with them and keep it filled with water or sports drink to remind themselves to stay hydrated.

© This is a sports nutrition publication of Sports Dietitians Australia.