**Golf Nutrition Tips**

Whether you are walking and carrying your clubs or riding in a cart, it is important to consider several aspects of your diet for optimal performance. The two key areas to be aware of during a round of golf are *maintaining normal blood sugar* and *staying well hydrated.*  During prolonged exercise the consumption of **carbohydrates** and **water** will greatly increase performance.

**General Fueling**

First, establish an eating schedule that works with your daily class and practice schedules. Skipping meals will take its toll and zap your energy and performance. Breakfast or a morning snack before early practices is an important meal, because most people use up most of their liver carbohydrate stores during the night while sleeping. Refilling these stores will help ensure that your body doesn’t borrow too much muscle energy throughout the day, saving it for practice.

**Hydration**

A 1% reduction in body weight (loss of fluids) corresponds with the need for your heart to beat an extra 3-5 times per minute. Any losses of body water that are 2% or greater will cause serious decline in performance and body function.

To optimize hydration:

* Start by drinking 16 oz of water when you wake up
* Drink throughout the day, rather than a lot at once
* If you have a hard time drinking water by itself, add some lemon or citrus to it to enhance the taste
* Include a hydrating beverage with your pre-game meal (water, 100% juice, etc.)
* Up to two hours before the start of exercise approximately 16 oz of fluid should be consumed
* Get 6-8 oz water or sports drink 15 minutes before exercise and every 15 minutes during the round (especially on hot days)
* If temperatures and humidity are high, it is best to alternate water with a sports drink that contains sodium to avoid dehydration (Ex: Gatorade or Powerade, ***not*** Vitamin Water)

**Game Day Fueling**

Game-day fueling is just as important as the days leading up. Many teams arrange a pregame meal three or four hours before tipoff. Carbohydrates are essential to optimize performance and maximize glycogen stores. Your pre-game meal should contain a balance of lean protein, carbohydrates in the form of whole grains as well as fruits and/or vegetables. This meal should be lower in fat, moderate in protein and should be something you are familiar with. You never want to try something new on game day, rather stick to what has worked well for you in the past.

* Examples of this meal might be:
  + a chicken sandwich on whole wheat bun, side salad and a banana or fruit cup
  + whole wheat pasta, tomato and meat sauce, small piece of whole-grain bread and a side salad

Don’t forget to include fluids with your meal to begin hydrating for the game! If you would like, a small snack can be eaten 1 hour prior to the game for extra energy (simple carbs (fruit) will reduce gastrointestinal upset during the game).

**Throughout the Game**

Since golf games can take up to 4-5 hours, you should pay attention to your nutrition during the game so that you have as much energy at the end, as you did when you started. Once you are on the course, you may want to try having a small amount of a healthy snack every 4-6 holes. *(A healthy snack will have some carbohydrate and protein and maybe a small amount of healthy fats)*.

* Examples of healthy snacks for the course are:
  + trail mix (combine nuts like almonds or walnuts with raisins or cranberries)
  + energy bars (Lara, Cliff, Odwalla, Balance, Zone, Kind, Luna)
  + pretzels and nut butter
  + fruit (fresh or dried)
  + Jerky
  + fig bars
  + PB and J sandwich

Golf is a low-moderate intensity sport as it is often played at less than 50% of VO2max. It is recommended to consume about 30-35 grams of carbohydrates per hour during golf. Also, don’t forget fluids about every 15 minutes. If temperatures are high, alternate between water and a sports drink that contains sodium to avoid dehydration (not vitamin water).

**What if my round is very early?**

If it is not practical to wake-up 4 hours before you exercise, try the following recommendations:

* Consume a small snack 30-90 minutes before exercise.
  + Fresh fruit (bananas are great) & nuts
  + Whole wheat bagel & light cream cheese
  + Yogurt & fruit
  + Cereal with skim milk
* Eat high quality carbohydrates with your proteins at dinner the night before.
  + Whole grain pasta with meat sauce
  + Brown rice with stir fry veggies & chicken
* Have an evening snack (again focusing on carbohydrates) the night before.

**After the Game**

Protein and carbohydrate play a key role in post-exercise nutrition to help restore muscle glycogen and promote amino acid re-synthesis. It is key to consume these nutrients as soon as possible after exercise, preferably within 30 minutes to optimize absorption and utilization of the nutrients. Carbohydrates should be the bulk of your meal with less protein (3:1 ratio). Don’t forget fluids! Water is key to intake after exercise, and should be comparable to how much fluid was lost. (see below)

**Fluids after exercise**

* Intake immediately after exercise is important  
  ~1.5 L (1,500 ml) fluid per kg of body weight lost
* Caffeine is not recommended because it causes dehydration
* Alcohol is also not recommended because it can deplete the body of nutrients and impair performance

**Travel Snack Ideas**

* Fresh *firm* fruit
  + Ex: Apples or oranges
* Trail mix
* Nuts
* Dried fruit
* PB&J
* Pretzels
* Peanut butter to-go cups
* Peanut butter crackers
* Seeds
* Granola
* Apple sauce
* Rice cakes
* Veggies
  + Ex: Baby carrots, celery sticks, bell peppers
* Hummus to-go cups
* Beef jerky
* String cheese
* Protein or granola bars
* Graham crackers
* Dark chocolate
* Sandwiches