Tournament Day Nutrition & Hydration Guide

NUTRITION & HYDRATION

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FUEL | HYDRATE | RECOVER

1 TOURNAMENT DAY PRIORITIES

Tournament football is different from a normal match because players may compete several times with limited recovery. The goal is to keep energy and hydration steady without leaving players feeling over-full between games.

2 BEFORE LEAVING HOME

- Eat a familiar breakfast or meal appropriate to the start time.
- Pack more food and water than you think you will need in case of delays.
- Include a mix of easy snacks plus a more substantial meal option if the day is long.
- Use a cool bag where food safety requires it.

BETWEEN GAMES - SHORT BREAK

- Prioritise fluids.
- Choose small, easy foods: banana, yoghurt, applesauce/fruit pouch, toast, crackers, small cereal bar.
- Avoid a large heavy meal if the next game is soon.

BETWEEN GAMES - LONGER BREAK

- A small sandwich/wrap, yoghurt, fruit or cereal may work well.
- If there is enough time, use a balanced mini-meal with carbohydrate and some protein.
- Keep foods familiar and portions sensible.

3 HYDRATION PLAN

- Start the first game already hydrated.
- Drink during every scheduled break, not only when thirsty.
- Refill bottles between matches and use shade/cool areas where available.
- Water is the main drink; electrolyte/carbohydrate drinks may have a role during prolonged vigorous activity, heavy sweating or hot conditions.

4 PACKING CHECKLIST

- 2 labelled water bottles or access to reliable refills.
- Fruit that travels well: bananas, oranges, grapes or similar.
- Yoghurt, milk drink or cheese where refrigeration is available.
- Sandwiches/wraps, crackers, cereal/oat bars or other familiar carbohydrate foods.
- Napkins, cool packs, allergy-safe alternatives and any required medications managed by the responsible adult.

5 AVOID COMMON TOURNAMENT MISTAKES

- Waiting until players are very hungry or thirsty.
- Large greasy fast-food meals immediately before the next game.
- Relying on sweets, fizzy drinks or energy drinks for repeated energy boosts.
- Trying unfamiliar supplements or new foods on competition day.
- Ignoring heat, humidity, travel delays or the actual time between fixtures.

TOURNAMENT RULE: little and often usually works better than one huge meal between games.

6 AFTER THE FINAL MATCH

Finish with fluids and a normal recovery meal containing carbohydrate, protein and fruit/vegetables. The aim is to restore normal eating and drinking, not to compensate with oversized portions or restrictive eating.

This resource provides general nutrition and hydration guidance for young players and is not individual medical or dietetic advice. Needs vary with age, growth, health, allergies, activity level and conditions. Parents and clubs should seek advice from a qualified healthcare professional or registered dietitian where appropriate.