

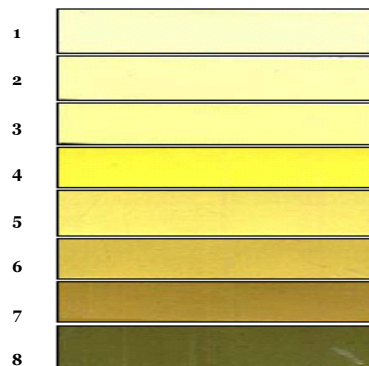
Hydration

Your body is made up of two-thirds water and when you exercise much is lost through sweating, breathing and talking. In warm weather you lose even more! Losing fluid can cause **dehydration** which leads to *premature fatigue and reduced performance*. When you sweat you lose both fluid and body salts, which further impacts on your ability to play as well as you can.

The recommendation for daily fluid consumption are **2 litres or 8 glasses**. This can come from a combination of water, milk juices, tea etc. For sports people it is important that you meet, if not exceed these recommendations.

Thirst is a poor indicator of dehydration—by this stage your performance could already be impaired

One way to monitor your hydration level is to keep a check on your urine colour. The chart below will assist with this. Numbers 1–3 is the **target colour**, 4–5 suggests **mild dehydration** and 6–8 **severe dehydration**. If your urine is dark during the day, address this by drinking fluid.



Good Habits

Now that you understand the recommendations about eating well for Gaelic Games, the best thing to do is to get into the habit of practicing them. Here are a few tips to help you along the way:

- *Always eat breakfast*
- *Never go to bed hungry*
- *Ensure you are eating a healthy diet to fuel your body for sport*
- *Get your own water bottle for daily use, training and matches*
- *Always pack a recovery snack to eat after exercise*
- *Never try something new on a match day—experiment at training instead*
- *Plan ahead if your usual routine is likely to be affected so you can still fuel and hydrate as normal*

If you want more information visit the Ulster GAA website www.ulster.gaa.ie

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Ulster GAA

Investing in player health

Nutrition & Hydration

Information for Players



The information in this leaflet includes recommendations to help you prepare for Gaelic Games.

Every player is different so read the information and decide what works best for you!



General advice

It is important to eat a healthy balanced diet day in, day out. This way you will ensure that your body is getting the vitamins, minerals, nutrients and importantly, the **energy**, it needs stay healthy and meet the demands of training and matches. The following information is to help you make correct food choices .

Carbohydrates: provide you with energy and should be included in every meal you eat to ensure you have adequate stores for exercise. Examples of complex carbohydrates include: *bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice.*



Protein: is essential for building, maintaining and repairing muscle. As an athlete you require more protein than those who do not take part in games. You can meet your protein needs by eating the following foods: *meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk and cheese.*



Fruit & Vegetables: you should aim to eat *5 portions* of these each day to ensure your body gets the vitamins and minerals it needs to remain healthy and ensure a strong immune system.



Fats: it is fine to have small amounts of fat in your diet, but for those involved in exercise eating large amounts is not recommended. Additionally fats can be slower to digest and should be avoided close to throw in. You can however include 'good' fats such as that found in oily fish, vegetable oils and nuts.



Eating for training/match

Pre match meal

You should eat your pre-exercise meal between **2-4 hours** before start time, to allow you to fuel appropriately. Your meal should be **carbohydrate based** to provide you with extra energy, include **lean protein** for muscle strength and contain **little or no fat** so that it is easily digested. You should include a drink too!

Examples include: pasta with tomato sauce; baked potato with beans; sandwiches with chicken/tuna/ham; porridge with fruit; toast with jam; include a drink ie water



Pre warm-up

In the **hour** before start time, you should eat easily **digestible carbohydrate snacks** to help maximize your energy stores. You may choose to drink a sports drink as an alternative. It is vital that you are taking on fluids at this time, so have your water bottle handy.

Examples include: ripe bananas; oranges; jaffa cakes; jelly beans; sports drink.



During match or training / Half time

Take on fluids as often as possible during exercise to replace those lost. Do not wait until you feel thirsty as you may well be dehydrated by this time.



Post Match / Training

After you have played a match or have been training your energy stores will be very low. It is vital that you begin re-fuelling immediately. The body can refuel most quickly in the first 30 minutes after you have finished exercise. Players should pack *recovery snacks* with their kit to allow refueling to begin.



Examples include: sandwiches with protein; fruit; yoghurt; yoghurt drink; cereal bars; sports drink.

It is important that you follow up with a proper meal within 2 hours of exercise.
Ensure that you rehydrate by drinking fluids (see overleaf)

Remember the Rules!

A handy way to focus on the foods you should be eating is to remember why they are important for your performance. All the foods you eat should apply to the rules below:

- **To provide energy to exercising muscles**
- **To help tissue (muscles) grow and repair**
- **To maintain a healthy immune system**
- **To refuel and hydrate between sessions**

