Client Name: Date:

RDN/NDTR: Email: Phone:

Fuel for Tennis Players

Successful tennis players rely on quickness and agility. Their nutrition plan should supply enough carbohydrate for training and matches that may run 3-4 hours, along with adequate fluids, especially in heat and humidity.

Tips

- Have 5 to 6 nutrient-rich meals each day to support performance and meet body composition goals.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables daily for vitamins and minerals.
- Make carbohydrate the main part of your diet. Carbohydrate needs range from 3 to 12 grams per kilogram of body weight, depending on your sport, position, daily training load, and overall goals. Your sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help choose the intake suited to you.
  - Select quality carbohydrate foods, such as whole grain cereals and breads, pasta, rice, starchy vegetables, dried or whole fruit, and low-fat yogurt and milk.
  - Limit refined carbohydrates and sweets, including cookies, pastries, cakes, candy, sugary soft drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened tea, and specialty coffee drinks.
- Protein supplies the materials to build muscle mass and support healthy growth and development. Estimated daily protein needs range from 1.2 to 2.0 grams per kilogram of body weight, depending on training status, training phase, and individual circumstances. Your sports RDN can explain the protein intake that meets your needs.
  - Protein timing matters when building muscle. Within 1 hour after training, eat protein with carbohydrate to supply amino acids, the building blocks of protein, for muscle growth and repair.
  - Try to have protein about every 3 hours in the day, including 1 hour before bed.
  - Protein above the recommended amount will neither speed muscle growth nor increase muscle mass.
- Include healthy fats to provide enough energy for training and help your body absorb vitamins. Fat should supply 20% to 35% of total calories. As training volume rises, your need for dietary fat also grows. Very high or very low fat intakes offer no performance advantage. Your sports RDN can help you determine the fat intake that meets your needs.
  - Healthy choices include olive oil, olives, nuts and nut butters, avocado, and plant oils, including canola oil.

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Carbohydrate and Protein Portions

Using serving sizes for carbohydrate and protein foods can make it easier to choose enough fuel before, during, and after training, and at meals and snacks. Your sports RDN can guide food portions and eating times to support your best sport performance.

Carbohydrate sources	Portion (1 serving = 15 grams carbohydrate)
Bread	1 slice
Tortilla	1, 6 inches
Corn	½ cup
Mashed potatoes	½ cup
Baked or sweet potato	½, medium
Rice	1/3 cup
Popcorn	3 cups
Apple	1, small
Grapes	15
Tangerine	2
Raisins	2 tablespoons
Orange juice	½ cup
Milk or yogurt	1¼ cups

Protein sources	Portion (1 serving = 7 grams protein)
Cheese	1 ounce
2% milk	1 cup
Plain yogurt	1 cup
Cottage cheese	¼ cup
Egg	1 whole
Beef, pork, chicken, turkey, or fish	1 ounce
Tofu	¼ cup
Nuts, seeds	2 tablespoons
Peanut butter	2 tablespoons
Black beans or kidney beans	½ cup, cooked

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Hydration

Plan for heat and humidity to protect health and performance during outdoor summer play. Losing more than 1% of body weight can reduce peak performance. Keep a full water bottle courtside and aim for about 5 ounces at each changeover.

Hydration Tips

Before practice or a match:

- Aim for 2-4 milliliters per pound of body weight 2 to 4 hours before starting, with a goal of pale yellow urine color.
- Sodium-containing drinks and/or salty snacks encourage thirst and help retain fluid.

During matches:

- Drink enough to keep total fluid losses below 2% of body weight. Try weighing before and after practice to see the percentage of body weight lost. This helps show whether your fluid intake is adequate for training and competition. Remember that weight lost in a training session is water, not muscle or fat tissue.
  - Your sports RDN will set personal hydration goals based on sweat rate, training status, temperature, humidity, and the intensity and length of play.
- In hot, humid conditions: Prevent excessive dehydration with drinks containing electrolytes, such as sports drinks. These are useful for long practices, games, or events and offer a balanced supply of carbohydrate, sodium, and potassium to replace losses. Follow your water-drinking schedule and listen to your body. Drink when thirsty and watch urine frequency and color. Frequent urination throughout the day with light-straw-colored urine usually means you are drinking enough.

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Meals Before, During, and After Training or Competition

These examples show how to time fuel around training or competition. Try the suggestions in training first to check that your stomach tolerates the schedule before competition day. Your sports RDN can tailor food choices and amounts to your needs.

When to Fuel	Suggested Fuel
	Fuel for Training and Competition
3-4 hours before an event **3-4 hours between events**	A meal 3-4 hours before training or competition, or between events, gives you time to digest. Choose plenty of carbohydrate, little fat, and moderate protein. ■ 6-inch turkey sub, 1 ounce tortilla chips, 1 piece of fruit, and 1 cup 2% milk OR ■ 1 grilled shrimp wrap in a flour tortilla, 1 ounce pretzels, 1 cup berries, and 1 cup soy milk
1-2 hours before an event **1-2 hours between events**	Choose a snack high in carbohydrate, low in fat, and moderate in protein 1-2 hours before training or competition, especially if you could not eat earlier. Between events, snack as tolerated to restore muscle fuel and prepare for the next event. Larger snacks are generally easier to tolerate when you have 2 hours. ■ 1 bagel with 1 tablespoon peanut butter OR ■ 1 granola bar providing 30-40 grams carbohydrate and 8-10 grams protein OR ■ 5-10 crackers plus 1 ounce cheese OR ■ 1 cup cereal, 1 cup 2% milk or soy milk, and 1 banana OR ■ ¾ cup yogurt plus ½ cup fruit OR ■ 12-16 ounces fruit smoothie containing no more than 8 grams protein OR ■ 8-12 ounces 2% chocolate milk plus 1 banana OR ■ 2 hard-boiled eggs and a low-protein/high-carbohydrate granola bar
Under 1 hour before an event or with 1 hour between events	Choose carbohydrate foods or drinks that digest quickly and easily. ■ Sports drinks (drink as tolerated; no set amount is suggested) OR ■ 1 piece of fruit such as a banana or orange
	During Training or Competition
Events lasting over 1 hour	During training or competition, have a snack with 30 to 60 grams carbohydrate each hour. ■ Sports drinks or sports foods, such as gel packets, gum packets, energy chews, or sport beans OR ■ 1 piece of fruit OR ■ 1 cup pretzels
	After Training or Competition
30 minutes after the event if another event follows the next day **Include recovery foods at your next meal if tomorrow is a rest day.**	Have a snack rich in carbohydrate and protein. Protein supports muscle repair; carbohydrate replenishes glycogen, the carbohydrate stored in muscle, used during training or competition. Aim for about 15 to 30 grams protein and 1.0 to 1.2 grams carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight. Your sports RDN can help select the right amounts. ■ 6-inch turkey sub OR ■ 1 grilled chicken sandwich OR ■ 12-16 ounces 2% chocolate milk or soy milk OR ■ 1 cup cottage cheese plus 1 piece of fruit OR ■ 10-15 crackers with 1-2 ounces cheese

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FAQs

What can ease cramps during long matches in hot weather?

The causes of sports cramps remain unclear, and no single prevention strategy works for everyone. However, many tennis players find that taking in more fluid and sodium brings relief.

The sodium in sports drinks may not be enough to prevent cramps. Sipping a mixture of ½ teaspoon salt and 32 ounces sports drink before and during a match may help.

Cramps can happen off court, too. If they do, try more salty foods and fluids. High-sodium choices include tomato juice, pretzels, soup, and pickles.

Low carbohydrate stores can also fatigue muscles and contribute to exercise-related cramps. Get enough carbohydrate before, during, and after play.

Some well-known professional players eat gluten-free. Could this improve my tennis performance?

Tennis players only need a gluten-free diet when they have gluten intolerance. Evidence does not show that avoiding gluten improves tennis performance. It could reduce performance by limiting gluten-containing carbohydrate foods, a dietary staple for most athletes. A gluten-free diet is not recommended without a medical reason.

Notes

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