

The Optimal Training Diet for Golfers



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Because golf is primarily a stop and start sport but continuous in nature, the muscle tension in swinging the club and the miles of walking between holes take a toll on the body. As fatigue and dehydration set in, skill levels can drop off dramatically. Golfers need to sustain intense mental and muscular focus, coupled with the bursts of energy required for long drives. In addition, the conditioning, strengthening and stretching that golfers do to prepare—all part of any athlete training—also require optimal sports nutrition.

The game is often played year-round, depending on geography, and another consideration is proper preparation for climate conditions. But no matter what the location or time of year, the physical effort and deep focus required in this sport can lead to physical stress and dehydration.

For repeatedly successful rounds, following these guidelines can help develop winning nutrition and hydration practices for golfers. The golf training diet should be focused on high-energy foods and adequate hydration, timed appropriately before and after play.

Pre-game eating and hydration

A diet rich in complex carbohydrates is the key to performance and endurance in any season. Carbohydrates fuel high-intensity work, which correlates to the energy bursts required in driving, the muscle focus involved in putting and the long walks between holes (especially for those without carts or caddies, it all adds up to quite a workout). Muscles store carbohydrates as glycogen, and consuming small amounts of carbs on a regular basis ensures maintenance of maximum glycogen levels.

Select pre-game meals and snacks that are:

- Familiar and known to settle hunger
- High in carbohydrates to supply energy for muscle reserves, moderate in protein and low in fat
- Quickly digested (not too high in fiber or fat or heavy meat proteins)

Examples of good pre-game foods include English muffins, pita bread, pasta, bread, fresh fruit, granola bars, energy bars, oatmeal, rice, grits, potatoes, corn, lima beans, black-eyed peas, chili beans and squash.

On course snacks:

Consider taking easy-to-digest light carbohydrate snacks, like energy bars – PowerBar™, Clif Bar™ or Odwalla Bar™, as well as fruit, like bananas, with you if your energy level starts to drop during a long golfing round in the heat.

Proper hydration during training and on the course is critical. Golfers should drink a half-cup to cup of water every 15 minutes during exercise and two cups of water for every pound of body weight lost during training or play. Fluid is critical to decreasing the risk of dehydration. Water molecules are absorbed into the muscle as carbohydrate feedings are converted into glycogen for storage. Limiting fluid intake limits a golfer's ability to store glycogen as energy.

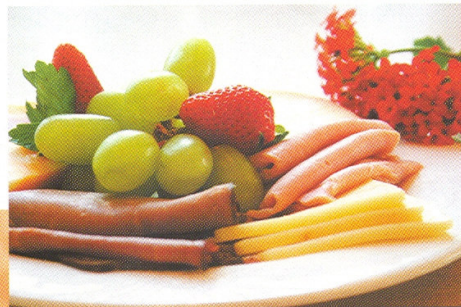
Tips for hydrating before hitting the course:

- Limit/avoid caffeinated beverages (iced teas, coffee, colas), especially right before and after play—they may cause additional fluid loss as urine
- The night before, fill and chill squeeze bottles or sports jugs and bring to

training or on the course (have a minimum of two liters available)

- Drink 17–24 ounces of fluid within two hours pre-play
- Consume enough fluids throughout the day so urine is a light or pale yellow color before starting your round

Thirst is not a good indicator of hydration level. Adequate fluid consumption is a golfer's best bet for beating dehydration (and heat illness in warm weather). An important tip is to favor sports drinks, as they contain carbohydrates and electrolytes, like sodium. Consuming carbohydrates during training and play has been shown to help golfers maintain more power and accuracy. Consider using a sport beverage like Gatorade™ on the course because sports beverages contain both carbohydrates and sodium, which is quickly absorbed and used by working muscles. Sodium replacement is also important since a significant amount of sodium can be lost through sweat on long courses in warm weather or windy conditions.



After a round of golf, follow these guidelines:

- Eat carbohydrates as soon as possible, preferably within 30 minutes of a game. Begin by drinking a sports drink as you walk off the course.
- Replace 150 percent of body fluids lost or at least 20 ounces per pound of weight loss within two hours.
- Eat a high-carbohydrate meal that also contains a lean protein source within two hours after play to maximize muscle glycogen recovery (rebuild energy stores) and to support protein synthesis in muscle.
- During tournament play, be sure to include carbohydrates, protein, fluid and sodium in the evening meal to accelerate recovery from play. Consider lightly salting foods and consuming foods and beverages that are natural sodium sources.
- Typical country club/golf shop fast food or higher fat choices such as hamburgers and French Fries are much higher in fat and lower in nutrient density in quality of carbohydrates than most golfers need for quick high quality energy replacement. Not to mention beer is not an ideal fluid replacement choice. If you do consume beer, however, make sure to still drink several cups of water along side of each 12 ounce beer to ensure appropriate hydration.



Gain a better understanding of food choices and servings associated with these guidelines by reviewing the food pyramid and related articles at <http://mypyramid.gov>. The recommended daily number of servings from food groups for the training diet is:

- Grains 10–12
- Vegetable Group 3–5
- Fruit Group 4–8
- Milk Group 2–4 (2 for adults, 4 for teens)
- Meat & Beans 2 portions 2–3 oz each
- Oils (fats) at least one tablespoon of vegetable fat per day (margarine or cooking oil cooked into food)
- Fluids 10 – 12 cups of any decaffeinated fluids

Following these guidelines is simple and can quickly become part of a player's routine. When this happens, it can help a golfer maintain strength and concentration during training, a day of 9 or 18 holes, or several days of tournament play. **A**

If you feel like you would benefit from some individual guidance on your training diet for golf or if you would like to slim down or gain muscle weight to improve your swing, consider contacting NutriFit, Sport Therapy Inc. to fine tune your sport nutrition practices. Please visit us at nutrifitga.com or call us locally at 770-457-1457.

