Adult: fuel for football

Daily eating

- Eatwell Guide base; adjust carbs to training load
- Protein spread over meals for repair
- Limit alcohol, especially after matches
- Vitamin D in autumn/winter per NHS advice

Matchday plan

- Night before: carb-focused meal
- 3-4 hrs: pre-match meal
- Warm-up/half-time: 30-60 g carbs
- After: recovery snack, then meal; go easy on alcohol

Before	Carb-rich, easily digested meal 3-4 hrs before kick-off (UEFA: 1-3 g/kg).
During	Water; about 30-60 g carbs after warm-up and at half-time for 90 min matches (UEFA).
After	Carbs + protein soon after; rehydrate with water and food.
Hydration	Start hydrated: about 5-7 ml/kg fluid 2-4 hrs before (UEFA); pale-yellow urine.

Meal and snack ideas

- Porridge, banana, honey
- Chicken, rice and veg
- Jelly sweets or sports drink at half-time
- Milk and a sandwich post-match

Note Food first. Adults considering supplements should seek advice from a registered professional.

Disclaimer

General guidance only, not medical or dietetic advice. Needs vary with age, growth, health, allergies and culture. For individual advice see a GP, registered dietitian or SENr-registered sports nutritionist. Under-18s: food first, no sports supplements or energy drinks; see a professional with any concerns.

Sources

NHS: The Eatwell Guide: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
NHS: Vitamin D: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/
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England Football Learning: How to help young people eat well:
https://learn.englandfootball.com/articles-and-resources/welfare/resources/2024/How-to-help-young-people-eat-well
UEFA expert group statement on nutrition in elite football (BJSM, 2021): https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/55/8/416

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Adult: match-day plan and recipes

Guidance only, not medical advice. See a GP or registered dietitian for allergies, intolerances or medical conditions. Nutrition figures are rough estimates, not lab-tested. Always check food labels for allergens.

Match-day plan

Breakfast: Overnight oats with berries (if kick-off is late morning, this is your pre-match meal)

3-4 hrs before: Chicken, tomato and spinach pasta

1-2 hrs before: Rice cakes with jam and a clementine. Small and familiar, nothing new on match day.

Half-time: Water; a banana or orange segments if hungry.

Within 1 hr after: Banana and oat recovery smoothie

Evening meal: Turkey and bean chilli with rice

Hydration: Start hydrated: about 5-7 ml/kg fluid 2-4 hrs before (UEFA); pale-yellow urine. Around 500ml in the 2 hours before; sip during breaks; rehydrate with water and food after. Alcohol slows recovery.

NHS daily limits: No more than 6g salt and 30g free sugars a day.

Overnight oats with berries

Breakfast | 5 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 50g porridge oats; 150g plain yoghurt; 100ml semi-skimmed milk; 80g berries (fresh or frozen); 1 tsp chia seeds (optional)

1. Mix oats, yoghurt and milk in a jar or tub.
2. Add berries on top, cover and chill overnight.
3. Eat cold, or warm for 1 minute in the microwave.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 520 kcal, 75g carbs, 23g protein, 13g fat, 0.4g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten (oats); Milk. Swaps: Dairy-free: soya yoghurt and drink. Swap berries for grated apple.

Scrambled eggs on wholemeal toast with tomatoes

Breakfast | 10 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 2 medium eggs; 2 slices wholemeal bread; 1 tsp spread; 6 cherry tomatoes, halved

1. Beat the eggs. Cook gently in a non-stick pan, stirring, for 2-3 minutes.
2. Toast the bread and spread thinly.
3. Serve eggs on toast with the tomatoes. Skip added salt.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 550 kcal, 42g carbs, 29g protein, 26g fat, 1.4g salt.

Allergens: Eggs; Cereals containing gluten; Milk (check spread); Soya (check bread and spread). Swaps: Veggie as is. Egg-free: mashed beans or hummus on toast. Gluten-free bread available.

Chicken, tomato and spinach pasta

Pre-match meal (3-4 hrs before) | 20 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 90g dried wholewheat pasta; 100g chicken breast, diced; 150g tomato passata; 1/2 red pepper, chopped; 1 handful spinach; 1 garlic clove, crushed; 1 tsp olive oil

1. Cook the pasta in boiling water for 10-12 minutes.
2. Fry chicken in the oil for 6-8 minutes until cooked through.
3. Add pepper and garlic for 2 minutes, then passata. Simmer 5 minutes.
4. Stir in spinach until wilted. Mix with the drained pasta.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 810 kcal, 110g carbs, 55g protein, 13g fat, 0.4g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten. Swaps: Veggie: 120g chickpeas instead of chicken. Gluten-free pasta works. Use white pasta if wholewheat sits heavy before a match.

Tuna and sweetcorn jacket potato

Pre-match meal (3-4 hrs before) | 10 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 1 medium potato (about 250g); 80g tinned tuna in spring water, drained; 2 tbsp sweetcorn; 1 tbsp light mayonnaise; Side salad (lettuce, cucumber)

1. Prick the potato. Microwave 7-9 minutes until soft (or bake 1 hour at 200C).
2. Mix tuna, sweetcorn and mayonnaise.
3. Split the potato, fill and serve with salad.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 560 kcal, 75g carbs, 34g protein, 12g fat, 0.9g salt.

Allergens: Fish; Eggs (mayonnaise); Mustard (check mayonnaise). Swaps: Veggie: reduced-salt baked beans or cottage cheese. Egg-free: plain yoghurt instead of mayonnaise.

Adult: recipes (continued)

Rice cakes with jam and a clementine

Snack (1-2 hrs before) | 2 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 2 plain rice cakes; 2 tsp reduced-sugar jam; 1 clementine

1. Spread jam thinly on the rice cakes.
2. Serve with the clementine.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 220 kcal, 47g carbs, 3g protein, 1g fat, 0.0g salt.

Allergens: None of the 14 in the basic recipe (check labels). Swaps: Light and easy to digest. Swap jam for a thin layer of peanut butter if no nut allergy.

Banana and oat recovery smoothie

Recovery (within 1 hr after) | 4 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 250ml semi-skimmed milk; 1 banana; 20g porridge oats; 80g frozen berries

1. Put everything in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth. Drink soon after training.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 490 kcal, 83g carbs, 18g protein, 9g fat, 0.4g salt.

Allergens: Milk; Cereals containing gluten (oats). Swaps: Dairy-free: fortified soya drink (similar protein). Add 1 tbsp peanut butter for older players if no allergy.

Baked salmon, sweet potato and green beans

Recovery meal (within 2 hrs after) | 30 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 1 salmon fillet (about 130g); 250g sweet potato, cut into wedges; 80g green beans; 1 tsp olive oil; Lemon wedge

1. Toss wedges in the oil. Roast at 200C for 25 minutes.
2. Add salmon to the tray for the last 12-15 minutes.
3. Boil or steam beans for 4 minutes. Serve with lemon.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 780 kcal, 72g carbs, 42g protein, 31g fat, 0.4g salt.

Allergens: Fish. Swaps: Swap salmon for mackerel, chicken or a bean burger. Oily fish once a week supports heart health (NHS).

Turkey and bean chilli with rice

Recovery meal (within 2 hrs after) | 35 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 120g lean turkey mince (5% fat); 120g kidney beans, drained; 200g chopped tomatoes; 1/2 onion and 1/2 pepper, chopped; 1 tsp mild chilli powder and 1 tsp cumin; 80g dried rice; 1 tsp oil

1. Brown the mince with onion and pepper in the oil.
2. Add spices, tomatoes and beans. Simmer 20 minutes.
3. Cook the rice and serve with the chilli.

Adult portion: 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 840 kcal, 98g carbs, 62g protein, 16g fat, 0.5g salt.

Allergens: Celery and mustard (check spice mixes and stock). Swaps: Veggie: double beans or add lentils. Freezes well.

Recipe sources

NHS: The Eatwell Guide: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide/
NHS: Salt in your diet (daily limits by age): https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-types/salt-nutrition/
NHS: Sugar, the facts (free sugar limits by age): https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-types/how-does-sugar-in-our-diet-affect-our-health/
NHS: Water, drinks and hydration: https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/water-drinks-nutrition/
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British Nutrition Foundation: Sport and exercise: https://www.nutrition.org.uk/creating-a-healthy-diet/sport-and-exercise/
UEFA expert group statement on nutrition in elite football (BJSM, 2021): https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/55/8/416