U14-U16: fuel for football

Daily eating

- Higher energy needs; eat enough to support growth and training
- Wholegrain carbs; more on match and heavy days
- Protein at every meal (no shakes needed)
- Iron for girls especially; calcium and vitamin D

Matchday plan

- Night before: pasta or rice-based meal
- 3-4 hrs before: cereal, toast, eggs
- 1-2 hrs: banana, water
- Half-time: water, fruit
- After: milk + sandwich, then a meal

Before	Carb-rich meal 3-4 hrs before; small snack 1-2 hrs before.
During	Sip water; for 60-90 min sessions some carbs (fruit, diluted squash) can help.
After	Carb + protein within an hour; balanced meal within 2 hrs.
Hydration	6-8+ glasses daily; pale-yellow urine; no energy drinks.

Meal and snack ideas

- Jacket potato with tuna
- Bagel with peanut butter
- Chicken pasta
- Low-fat milk and banana after

Note Food first: under-18s do not need sports supplements, protein shakes or energy drinks. Speak to a GP or registered dietitian with any concerns.

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/
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https://learn.englandfootball.com/articles-and-resources/welfare/resources/2024/How-to-help-young-people-eat-well
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U14-U16: 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. Under-18s: food first. No sports supplements, caffeine or energy drinks.

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: Banana toast. 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: Lemon chicken, rice and broccoli bowl

Hydration: 6-8+ glasses daily; pale-yellow urine; no energy drinks. Start sessions hydrated: around 300-500ml of water in the 2 hours before. Water or milk only: no energy drinks or caffeine drinks for under-18s.

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.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 400 kcal, 58g carbs, 18g protein, 10g fat, 0.3g 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.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 420 kcal, 32g carbs, 22g protein, 20g fat, 1.1g 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.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 620 kcal, 85g carbs, 42g protein, 10g fat, 0.3g 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.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 430 kcal, 58g carbs, 26g protein, 9g fat, 0.7g salt.

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

U14-U16: recipes (continued)

Veggie egg fried rice with peas

Pre-match or recovery meal | 15 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 80g dried long-grain rice (or 200g cooked, cooled); 1 medium egg, beaten; 80g frozen peas; 2 spring onions, sliced; 1 tsp vegetable oil; 1 tsp reduced-salt soy sauce

1. Cook the rice and cool quickly, or use chilled cooked rice.
2. Heat the oil, add peas and spring onion for 2 minutes.
3. Add rice and stir-fry until piping hot. Push aside, scramble the egg, then mix through.
4. Season with the soy sauce.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 480 kcal, 80g carbs, 16g protein, 10g fat, 0.9g salt.

Allergens: Eggs; Soya; Cereals containing gluten (most soy sauce). Swaps: Gluten-free: tamari. Add 100g cooked chicken or tofu for extra protein. Cool and reheat rice only once.

Banana toast

Snack (1-2 hrs before) | 3 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 1 slice wholemeal or white toast; 1 small banana, mashed or sliced; 1 tsp honey (optional)

1. Toast the bread.
2. Top with banana and a drizzle of honey.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 230 kcal, 45g carbs, 6g protein, 3g fat, 0.4g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten. Swaps: Gluten-free bread. Swap honey for cinnamon to cut sugar. No honey for babies under 1.

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.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 380 kcal, 64g carbs, 14g protein, 7g fat, 0.3g 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.

Lemon chicken, rice and broccoli bowl

Recovery meal (within 2 hrs after) | 25 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 130g chicken breast; 90g dried brown or white rice; 100g broccoli; 1 tsp olive oil; 1/2 lemon, juice and zest; 1 tsp mixed herbs

1. Cook the rice.
2. Toss chicken with oil, lemon and herbs. Pan-fry or grill 12-15 minutes until cooked through.
3. Steam the broccoli for 4 minutes.
4. Slice the chicken and serve over rice and broccoli.

U14-U16 portion: full of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 680 kcal, 75g carbs, 48g protein, 14g fat, 0.3g salt.

Allergens: None of the 14 in the basic recipe. Swaps: Veggie: 150g firm tofu (contains soya) or 2 eggs. Batch-cook for the week.

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/
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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
British Nutrition Foundation: Sport and exercise: https://www.nutrition.org.uk/creating-a-healthy-diet/sport-and-exercise/
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