U8-U9: fuel for football

Daily eating

- Regular meals and snacks; don't skip breakfast
- Starchy carbs at each meal, wholegrain where possible
- Protein each day: eggs, beans, fish, chicken, dairy
- Fruit and veg at every meal

Matchday plan

- Breakfast 3 hrs before: porridge or toast
- 1 hr before: fruit, water
- Half-time: water, orange slices
- After: milk and a balanced meal

Before	Main meal 2-3 hrs before; small carb snack 1 hr before.
During	Sip water at every break.
After	Within an hour or so: milk, yoghurt and fruit, or the next meal.
Hydration	About 6-8 drinks a day; pale-yellow urine is a good sign. Water or milk are best.

Meal and snack ideas

- Beans on toast
- Fruit yoghurt and granola
- Chicken wrap with salad
- Rice cakes and banana

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/
NHS: Vitamin D: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/
British Nutrition Foundation: Nutrition for children: https://www.nutrition.org.uk/nutrition-for/children/
British Nutrition Foundation: Nutrition for teenagers: https://www.nutrition.org.uk/nutrition-for/teenagers/
British Nutrition Foundation: Sport and exercise: https://www.nutrition.org.uk/creating-a-healthy-diet/sport-and-exercise/
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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U8-U9: 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: Scrambled eggs on wholemeal toast with tomatoes
3-4 hrs before: Chicken, tomato and spinach pasta (a normal family meal is fine)
1-2 hrs before: Banana toast. Small and familiar, nothing new on match day.
Half-time: Water and orange slices or a few bites of banana.
Within 1 hr after: Banana and oat recovery smoothie
Evening meal: Cheese and salad wholemeal sandwich with fruit

Hydration: About 6-8 drinks a day; pale-yellow urine is a good sign. Water or milk are best. Offer water at every break. Water or milk only: no energy drinks or caffeine drinks for under-18s.

NHS daily limits: No more than 5g salt and 24g free sugars a day (age 7-10).

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.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 250 kcal, 19g carbs, 13g protein, 12g fat, 0.7g 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.

Banana and cinnamon porridge

Breakfast | 8 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 50g porridge oats; 250ml semi-skimmed milk; 1 small banana, sliced; Pinch of ground cinnamon

1. Put oats and milk in a pan over a medium heat.
2. Stir for 4-5 minutes until thick and creamy.
3. Top with banana and cinnamon. No added sugar needed.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 250 kcal, 42g carbs, 9g protein, 5g fat, 0.2g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten (oats, unless certified gluten-free); Milk. Swaps: Dairy-free: fortified oat or soya drink. Gluten-free: certified gluten-free oats.

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.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 370 kcal, 51g carbs, 25g protein, 6g fat, 0.2g 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.

Mini pitta pizzas

Pre-match meal (3-4 hrs before) | 12 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 1 wholemeal pitta; 2 tbsp tomato passata; 25g grated mozzarella; Chopped pepper, sweetcorn or mushrooms

1. Spread passata on the pitta.
2. Add the veg and cheese.
3. Grill or bake at 200C for 6-8 minutes until bubbling. Cool slightly.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 180 kcal, 25g carbs, 8g protein, 5g fat, 0.5g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten; Milk. Swaps: Add chicken or ham for protein. Dairy-free cheese for milk allergy.

U8-U9: recipes (continued)

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.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 140 kcal, 27g carbs, 4g protein, 2g fat, 0.2g salt.

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

Fruity yoghurt pot

Snack (1-2 hrs before) | 3 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 125g plain or low-sugar yoghurt; 80g chopped fruit (berries, banana or tinned peaches in juice)

1. Spoon yoghurt into a pot.
2. Top with fruit.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 90 kcal, 13g carbs, 4g protein, 2g fat, 0.1g salt.

Allergens: Milk. Swaps: Dairy-free: fortified soya or oat yoghurt.

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.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 230 kcal, 38g carbs, 8g protein, 4g fat, 0.2g 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.

Cheese and salad wholemeal sandwich with fruit

Recovery (within 1 hr after) | 5 min

Ingredients (1 standard portion): 2 slices wholemeal bread; 25g reduced-fat cheddar, grated; Cucumber and tomato slices; 1 apple

1. Fill the bread with cheese and salad.
2. Cut into quarters and serve with the apple.

U8-U9 portion: about 2/3 of the recipe. Approx. (estimate) 240 kcal, 31g carbs, 11g protein, 7g fat, 0.8g salt.

Allergens: Cereals containing gluten; Milk. Swaps: Swap cheese for egg, tuna or chicken. Dairy-free spread.

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/
NHS Healthier Families: Healthier snacks: https://www.nhs.uk/healthier-families/food-facts/healthier-snacks/
NHS: Food allergy: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/
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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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