



Nutrition and Hydration

A one-page guide for an adult squad training twice midweek plus a Saturday match — not a diet plan, just the three moments that matter most and what the evidence says about each.

This is guidance, not prescription. Players have different bodies, budgets and schedules, and nobody is being asked to weigh food. The point is three simple habits — fuel before a heavy training night, drink through the session rather than only at the end, and use the hour after a match properly — that cost nothing and are the standard, evidence-based starting point at exactly this level.

1. Before training — the double-training-night problem

Tuesday and Thursday both ask a lot of the same players inside one week, on top of work, family and a Saturday match either side. Turning up under-fuelled makes the heavier Tuesday session (Season Architecture, Section 7) feel harder than it needs to and blunts what it's designed to build.

The simple version: eat a carbohydrate-containing meal or snack 2–3 hours before training — pasta, rice, potatoes, a sandwich, porridge, a banana and toast. If that's not realistic before a 7pm session after a working day, a smaller carbohydrate snack 30–60 minutes before (a banana, a cereal bar, a slice of toast) is a real and useful substitute, not a lesser option.

What to avoid: turning up having skipped food since lunch, or relying on a heavy, high-fat meal immediately before training — both cost energy and comfort during the session itself.

2. During training and matches — hydration

Over a full match, a player can lose more than a litre in sweat, and dehydration measurably reduces concentration, decision-making and physical output well before a player feels thirsty — thirst is a late signal, not an early one.

The simple version: bring a water bottle to every session and match, and drink at every natural break — not just at the final whistle. In hot or humid conditions, or during a double session, this matters more, not less.

Match day specifically: normal water is sufficient for the great majority of amateur matches. A carbohydrate-electrolyte drink is a reasonable option for players who struggle to eat enough beforehand, or in unusually hot conditions, but it is not a requirement for every player, every week.

3. After a match — the recovery window

This is the single highest-value moment in this whole page. The first hour after full time is when the body is most efficient at replacing what the match used, and it is also, inconveniently, exactly when it's easiest to skip food entirely — showered, changed, straight to the car.

The simple version: within roughly an hour of full time, aim for a combination of carbohydrate and protein — a meal if one is genuinely available that quickly, or a practical stand-in: a pint of milk, a yoghurt and a banana, a protein shake with fruit, or a simple sandwich. None of this needs to be exact or measured; the point is doing something in that window rather than nothing.

Rehydrate too: replace fluid losses across the rest of the evening, not just the first hour — plain water is sufficient for the majority of players.

MOMENT	SIMPLE TARGET	PRACTICAL EXAMPLE
Before a heavy training night	A carbohydrate-containing meal or snack 2–3 hours out	Pasta or rice meal; or a banana and toast if time is short
During training/match	Drink at every natural break, don't wait for thirst	A water bottle on the touchline, used at every stoppage
Within ~1 hour of full time	Carbohydrate + protein together	A pint of milk, a yoghurt and a banana, or a simple sandwich

What this doesn't cover

This page is deliberately general — it is not personalised advice, and it does not account for individual medical conditions, allergies, or specific goals (weight management, an underlying health condition). Any player with a specific dietary or medical need should be pointed toward their GP or a registered dietitian rather than this page. This guidance is for adult players; it is deliberately not extended to the Youth curriculum, where dietary guidance sits closer to a parental and, where needed, clinical responsibility than a coaching one.

Sources

Carbohydrate and protein intake ranges drawn from UEFA expert group and International Society of Sports Nutrition (ISSN) position guidance for team-sport athletes; post-match recovery window and hydration figures drawn from peer-reviewed practical recovery guidance for soccer players (*Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition*, "Practical nutritional recovery strategies for elite soccer players when limited time separates repeated matches"). Figures here are simplified deliberately for a recreational, non-elite context — the underlying evidence is written for a higher training load than this squad carries, and has been scaled down accordingly rather than quoted at elite-level intensity.

Castlewellan Town FC · Senior Coaching Curriculum · nutrition and hydration one-pager · written by Alan Cunningham with Claude AI