

Volleyball Tournament Nutrition Tips

Courtesy of Strength-and-Power-for-Volleyball.com

Here are some basic volleyball tournament nutrition tips. Nutrient timing, carbohydrates and protein, and the importance of electrolytes to prevent dehydration and cramping.

Nutrition Tips for Volleyball Tournaments

1. **Eat breakfast.**

Muscle glycogen levels are typically lower when you wake up in the morning, so you need to replenish by consuming carbohydrates. With volleyball being an anaerobic sport, carbohydrates are even more important because they are the main source of energy used in anaerobic activity.

2. **Eat every two to three hours throughout the day.**

It's a good idea to eat a combination of simple and complex carbohydrates throughout the day. Even if just small snacks, eating and drinking throughout the day can help prevent your performance from suffering due to dehydration, severe electrolyte losses, and loss of energy due to muscle glycogen depletion.

3. **Simple carbohydrates before, during, and after matches.**

Complex carbohydrates (breads, pastas, starches) are great, but let's not forget that value of consuming simple carbohydrates during a volleyball tournament.

Carbohydrates found in fruit (bananas, grapes, watermelon, cantaloupe), beverages (sports drinks, nutrition drinks), or snacks (granola bars, PowerBar® Products) can give you energy quickly because they are more readily available to be absorbed by the body. Since these carbohydrates are to be used for energy right away, it's best to consume them before, during, or immediately after you play.

4. **Drink plenty of water.**

Water can definitely be the most important factor effecting sports performance. Not only is it a good idea to drink throughout the day, but also drink a few days or throughout the week before the volleyball tournament to acclimate your body. On the flip side, make sure you are also consuming nutrients and not just flushing nutrients out of your system.

You can actually cause problems by drinking too much water. For example, if you don't eat and all you do is drink a ton of water, you could actually dilute too much sodium (an important electrolyte) from your body creating a condition known as hyponatremia. Drinking too much water can actually help cause muscle cramping from the severe loss of electrolytes.

5. **Post tournament nutrition drink, shake, snack, or meal.**

After a volleyball tournament it is important to eat to help your body recover from the long playing day. Eating well will help your body recover for your next volleyball workout or practice.

After the tournament may be a good time to consume some more protein because it's often tough to get your protein in during the volleyball tournament. Also, consuming

carbohydrates with the protein will likely help move nutrients into your muscle tissue quicker which is obviously beneficial to recovery.

A Couple Volleyball Tournament Day Scenarios

1. Do you feel you don't have enough energy to make it through the tournament?

Assuming you aren't in terrible physical shape to play volleyball, my first guess would be you aren't consuming enough carbohydrates. Look at what you ate that day and what you ate the last couple of days.

If you aren't consuming carbohydrates, particularly complex carbohydrates (breads, cereals, pastas, potatoes), then try changing your diet so you are consuming more complex carbs.

Consuming complex carbohydrates more throughout the day and the days leading up to the volleyball tournament will likely help a lot.

With that said, if you suspect you just might not be in that good of shape to play all day, a good volleyball conditioning program emphasizing power endurance will likely help.

2. Can't make it through a tournament without cramping.

Some common causes of muscle cramps include...

- * Straining or overusing a muscle
- * Muscle dehydration
- * A lack of minerals in your diet or the depletion of minerals in your body

If you haven't been drinking water throughout the day of the tournament, obviously try to drink more. It's also a good idea to replenish your muscles with electrolytes (mainly sodium, but also potassium, chloride, and magnesium are important for muscle contraction) throughout the volleyball tournament.

Many athletes find it helps to eat bananas or other fruits that are high in potassium.

It can be helpful to consume foods or sports drinks that contain sodium because sodium is lost from the body through sweating.

Sports drinks such as Gatorade® and Powerade® are replacement drinks that can offset sodium losses in sweat and reduce chances of muscle cramping.

However, be careful when choosing your replacement drinks. Many energy drinks look like sports drinks and aren't good for you. Some can be harmful because they contain high amounts of caffeine and a ton of sugar among other things.

Volleyball Tournament Nutrition Tip:

Choosing snacks

Sports bars have become popular for supplementing sports training and competition. When choosing sports bars, always check the label for the total amount of carbohydrates, protein, and fat. A ratio of about 4:1, 5:1, or 6:1 (carbs:protein) is usually a pretty good range. During a volleyball tournament, think of consuming protein for recovery from playing, not energy to improve performance. Carbohydrates will likely be your main source of energy for playing volleyball. Of course, every athlete is different so always experiment first to see what works best for you.