



[www.BokSmart.com](http://www.BokSmart.com)



## Rugby Nutrition:

### The Role of Nutrition in Rugby

Nutrition, like training, can go a long way in improving rugby performance and requires dedication and proper focus.

Skipping a meal or a snack is like skipping a training session.

And, just like training, where the **quality** of training and not just **quantity** counts (i.e. training Smart), paying attention to the quality of your diet and the **timing** of 'when you eat what' is equally important.

These strategies will allow you to capitalise on your training and make the right gains or improvements.

This is **Smart nutrition** and this is what sets apart excellent players and teams from average players and teams.

**What are the principles of Smart nutrition?** <sup>[1]</sup>

- ✓ ***Dietary plans must be targeted and individualised.*** Each player has specific requirements depending on their position of play, level of play, type/variation of rugby (e.g. Rugby Sevens versus Fifteen-a-side), age, gender, medical history, and so on.
- ✓ ***The dietary plan must be periodised*** and adjusted according to the specific requirements of a particular training phase, tournament or competition.



- ✓ **Nothing must be left to chance.** You train the way you wish to play. The same applies to your diet! All dietary strategies should be tried and tested during training, and not suddenly be introduced at matches. This will go a long way to building confidence and reducing unnecessary stress during competition.
- ✓ **Meal plans must be food focused** with supplements integrated only if and when it is clinically deemed necessary, or according to the prevailing rugby policy regarding the use of supplements.
- ✓ **The meal plan must be practical to implement**, taking into account immediate and long-term health, well-being, performance goals, budget and lifestyle.
- ✓ **The messaging and approach must be consistent**, with all role players (player, coach, parent, team physicians and dietitians, fitness trainers) **supporting** the plan.

**LEAVE NOTHING TO CHANCE:**

Train the way you wish to play. The same applies to your diet! Anything new should be tried and tested during training.

### What can Smart nutrition do for you?

As a rugby player, following an optimal **DIET** (*preferably compiled by a registered dietitian with experience in sports; in this instance **rugby!***), which directly complements your training, can help you improve your performance by: <sup>[2]</sup>

- ✓ Helping you achieve and maintain your **ideal body size and body composition**;
- ✓ Supporting optimal **growth and development**;
- ✓ Aiding in **recovery post-training or post-match**;
- ✓ **Optimising energy stores** prior to training and/or matches;
- ✓ Reaping the benefits and adaptations associated with training, like **muscle reconditioning**;
- ✓ Optimising your **physical skills**;
- ✓ Enhancing **concentration**;
- ✓ Assisting improvements in **speed and/or endurance**;
- ✓ Minimising **gastro-intestinal discomfort**;
- ✓ Helping you **cope with the stress, fatigue and environmental changes** associated with **travelling** and competition;

- ✓ Promoting **long-term health and well-being**.

*“The best food choices may not make a champion out of a rugby player with no talent, but an inadequate diet can certainly prevent a talented player from reaching optimal training and performance levels”.<sup>[3]</sup>*

## TAKE HOME MESSAGE:

What makes **dietary intervention** particularly exciting is that **it is a controllable factor and is achievable!**

With the right knowledge and professional advice, you can implement many practical strategies that may help your performance, and minimize your risk of ingesting contaminated products and banned substances.

In the additional *Rugby Nutrition* sections that follow on the BokSmart website ([www.BokSmart.com](http://www.BokSmart.com)), common ground is discussed with regards to the latest dietary principles for performance.

For more info on *Rugby Nutrition*, go to: <http://boksmart.sarugby.co.za/content/eating-and-drinking-right>. These sections will provide plenty of examples to show you how you can adapt nutritional guidelines to meet your specific goals – for example, if you need to gain weight, lose weight, play Sevens, and so on.

## REFERENCES

1. Meltzer S and Hopkins N. Nutrition for Technical and Skill-based training. In: *Sport and Exercise Nutrition*. First Edition. 2011. The Nutrition Society. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
2. Burke LM, Deakin V. *Clinical Sports Nutrition*, 4thEd. Australia: McGraw-Hill, 2009.
3. Meltzer S and Fuller C. Practical Nutrition for Rugby. BokSmart; <http://boksmart.sarugby.co.za/content/eating-and-drinking-right>

*Document Compiled by S Meltzer RD (SA), Shelly Meltzer & Associates*