



Fuelling Tournament Days

Simple nutrition for energy,
hydration & recovery


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Hi, I'm Anna — a NZ Registered Clinical Nutritionist, Performance Nutritionist, and a Hibiscus Coast local.

Our family has been part of the local football community for nearly 10 years, and you'll often find me on the sidelines cheering on my boys, including my youngest, who is a keen goalkeeper.

I understand the reality of trying to keep active kids fuelled well.

Tournament days especially have a way of undoing even the best everyday nutrition habits, so I put this guide together to help young athletes arrive fuelled, stay sharp, and recover well — no matter how many games are on the schedule.

If you see me on the sidelines, please come and say hi — I love chatting about all things food, fuel, and performance.

WHY TOURNAMENT DAYS FEEL DIFFERENT

Tournament days place extra demands on young athletes.

More games, longer hours, heat, excitement and short recovery windows can quickly drain energy and fluids.

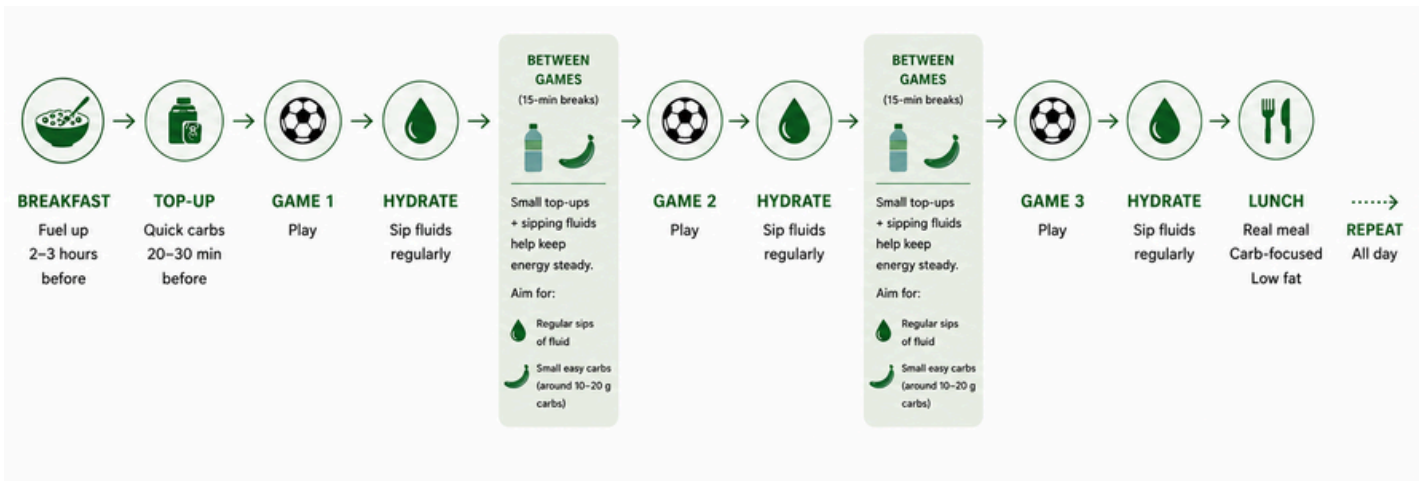
Many athletes do not fade because they lack fitness. They fade because they run low on fuel, fluid or both.



💡 THE GOLDEN RULE

Small, regular fuel + regular sips of fluid work better than one big meal.

TOURNAMENT DAY AT A GLANCE



Keep it simple. Keep it consistent. Keep them fuelled and hydrated.

START STRONG

Tournament fuel starts before game day.

The day before:

- Regular meals and snacks
- Enough carbohydrates
- Protein
- Good hydration
- Extra fluids in hot weather
- A good night's sleep



BEFORE THE FIRST GAME

2 hours before

Choose a balanced breakfast with:

1. Carbohydrates
2. Light/moderate protein
3. Lower fat
4. Lower fibre
5. Fluids

Breakfast examples:

- Oats + milk + banana + honey
- Toast + eggs + fruit
- Yoghurt + muesli + berries
- Bagel + peanut butter + banana
- Weetbix + milk + fruit

Start drinking early.

Small sips between waking and warm-up work best.



BETWEEN GAMES

Tournament days work best with:

- ✓ Small regular carbs
- ✓ Regular sips of fluid
- ✓ Easy-to-digest foods
- ✓ Consistent top-ups between games

BETWEEN GAMES

Choose quick, easy-to-digest foods that are:

- Low fibre
- Low fat
- Low protein
- Quick energy
- Easy on the stomach

Examples below :



💡 These foods provide quick fuel without sitting heavy in the stomach during games.

LUNCH TIME FUELLING

Lunch should refuel, not slow you down

Better choices:

- Carb-focussed
- Moderate protein
- Lower fat
- Lower fibre
- Easy to digest

Examples:

- Chicken wrap + fruit
- Sushi
- White sandwich + ham
- Plain pasta + chicken



Save these for after the final game:






- Hot chips
- Sausage sizzle
- Icecream
- Fried foods
- Donuts
- Large greasy meals

💡 No foods are “bad” or “off limits”. But during tournaments, greasy or heavy foods are better saved for after the final game because they can sit heavily, make running uncomfortable, and reduce performance.

HYDRATION MATTERS

Even mild dehydration can affect:

- ⚡ Energy
- 🏃 Running capacity
- 🎯 Concentration
- 🧠 Decision making
- 🔄 Recovery

 Water bottle (2 per person minimum)	 Sip regularly throughout the day	 Drink before, during & after games/training	 Add electrolytes on hot days or long sessions	 Check urine colour: Pale yellow = hydrated Dark yellow = dehydrated
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Signs of dehydration:

- Dark urine
- Headache
- Heavy legs
- Dizziness
- Low Energy
- Irritability

Electrolytes can be useful:

- In hot weather
- For heavy sweaters
- During long tournament days
- When games are close together
- When food is not tolerated well

Simple options:

- Electrolyte tablets/sachets
- Small sports drink
- Water + salty snack like pretzels



💡 Sports drinks can help provide fluids, electrolytes, and energy/carbs when food isn't well tolerated. Regular options usually work better than sugar-free during sport.

WHAT TO PACK

Your Tournament Fuel kit

Quick Carbs

- Bananas
- Apple sauce pouch
- Muesli bar
- Pretzels
- Rice crackers
- Dried fruit
- Sports drinks
- Crumpets
- Snakes
- Oranges



Protein + Recovery

- Yoghurt pouch
- Boiled eggs
- Ham
- Breakfast drink
- Chicken wrap
- Biltong
- Chocolate milk



Hydration

- Water bottle (2 per person minimum)
- Electrolyte tablets
- Sports drink



Extras

- Cooler bag
- Ice packs
- Ziplog bags
- Wet wipes
- Napkins
- Sunscreen
- Sunhat



💡 Chocolate milk or flavoured milk can make a great recovery drink after a tournament, naturally providing a useful balance of carbohydrates, protein, fluids, and electrolytes to support recovery.

