



# Fueling Tennis Players

## Fueling Your Sport

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- The number of calories that you need to play tennis depends on your age, gender, training intensity and duration, and competition schedule. Tennis is a high-intensity sport involving hundreds of short bursts of activity. Most points in tennis last less than 10 seconds. But tennis is also an endurance sport. When you play long matches, there are only 25 seconds of rest between points and only 90 seconds between games. It is very important to have enough energy and fluids.
- You use 5 to 11 calories per minute when you play singles recreational tennis and 3.4 to 7.7 calories per minute when you play doubles. Competitive tennis players can burn 6.4 to 14.4 calories per minute of activity.
- You need to eat at least 2.7 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (6 g/kg/day). When you are on the court several hours a day, you need to eat more carbohydrate: 3.2 to 4.5 grams per pound per day (7 to 10 g/kg/day).
- Eating carbohydrate can improve the quality of your stroke in the final stages of a long tennis match. Eat 100 grams of carbohydrate about 30 minutes before a match, and eat an additional 50 grams every 2 hours during the match.
- Good sources of carbohydrate include whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables.
- Tennis players need 0.55 to 0.8 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day (1.2 to 1.7 g/kg/day). Eating more protein than this does not improve your tennis.
- Good sources of protein include fish, chicken, turkey, beef, low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, nuts, and soy foods (tofu, soy nuts, and soy burgers).

- Carbohydrate is a better fuel than fat for playing tennis, but you do need to eat some fat every day to stay healthy. Also, your body will burn fat for energy during long matches. Eat at least 0.45 grams of fat per pound of body weight per day (1 g/kg). Choose heart-healthy fats, such as canola oil, olive oil, and nuts.

## Fluid Needs

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- Tennis players need a planned schedule for drinking fluids. Drinking enough fluids improves performance and helps prevent heat illness during training and competition.
- Drink on a schedule. Drink 2 cups of water or sport drink 2 hours before practice or competition.
- On hot, humid days and when the sun is at its peak, choose sport drinks.
- During matches, keep a bottle of sport drink in a cooler on the bench and drink 5 to 10 ounces at every change-over. Most players can easily drink 5 ounces.
- After matches, drink enough to replace lost water weight. Drink 3 cups of fluid for every pound lost during practice or a match.
- Check the color of your urine. A pale, straw color means you are hydrated.
- If you get cramps, you may need more fluid and sodium. If you get cramps often, add ½ teaspoon of table salt to 32 ounces of sport drink, or choose an “endurance” formula sport drink. It will contain more sodium than a regular sport drink.

## Supplements Commonly Used by Tennis Players

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- Creatine supplementation may help athletes in high-intensity, short-duration activities, like the short bursts of play in tennis.
- Creatine may help you recover more quickly from workouts, which could help you train harder.
- Creatine monohydrate powder is a common creatine supplement. The recommended dose is 3 to 5 grams per day spread throughout the day. Taking more than that amount does not increase the benefits.
- Creatine does not help with endurance, and it may cause weight gain.
- Creatine is not recommended for athletes younger than 18 years because it is not known whether it is safe for use in people in that age group.
- Energy bars and gels can provide added calories to your food plan. Choose an energy bar that provides more carbohydrate than protein or fat.
- Energy gels can give you extra calories and carbohydrates for day-long tournaments. Gels are concentrated carbohydrates, and you should drink extra fluids when you use them.

## Top Three Nutrition Tips to Improve Performance

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- 1. Replace the fluids, electrolytes, and carbohydrates that your body loses in long matches.** This will help you recover faster and get you ready for the next match. A sport drink can help replace fluid, electrolytes, and carbohydrates. Drink sport drinks at the end of the match to start to recover. At the meal after your match, eat plenty of carbohydrate-rich foods, salt your food, and drink plenty of fluids.

- 2. Train your body to tolerate fluids during exercise.**

Many tennis players don't drink enough because they feel like fluids "slosh" around in their stomachs. To get over this feeling, start by drinking a small amount (about ½ cup) at the change-over when you train, and gradually increase the amount you drink to 1 cup. Drinking more helps move fluids into your blood and muscles where they are needed.

- 3. Work with a sports dietitian to create a food and fluid plan.** A sports dietitian can help you plan prematch, match, and postmatch foods and fluids that fit your training schedule and your lifestyle.

### Nutrition Prescription:

\_\_\_\_\_ calories per day  
\_\_\_\_\_ grams of carbohydrate per day  
\_\_\_\_\_ grams of protein per day  
\_\_\_\_\_ grams of fat per day  
\_\_\_\_\_ cups of fluid per day

Special concerns: