



Villa Maria Academy Girls Water Polo

Nutrition for optimal performance before, during, and after water polo games

Why is nutrition so important?

- The right mix of healthy carbohydrates replenishes glycogen (stored energy) during and after exercise while repairing lean body mass
 - Having enough healthy carbs in your diet helps prevent early fatigue & injury
- Because carbohydrates are your body's primary fuel source during exercise, having an adequate supply of healthy carbs will prevent muscle fatigue and breakdown

How do I eat right during my games?

- Choose whole grains/healthy carbs rather than white or refined carbohydrates
- Include lean sources of protein for every meal & snack (fish, chicken, turkey, low-fat dairy, eggs, seafood, or tofu)
- Choose healthy fats (peanut butter, avocados, nuts, seeds, olive oil) rather than saturated fats & trans fats (baked/packaged foods, high-fat meats, creamy sauces, gravies, salad dressings, margarine, etc.)
- Stay hydrated with water throughout the day, especially during extended exercises
- Eat a post-exercise snack within 30 minutes to help train your body to increase its glycogen stores, which will provide more energy for each exercise

When do I eat on game days?

3-4 hours before games: Good carbohydrate choices, lean protein, low fiber and low fat. Include at least 16-20 oz of water

30min-1 hour before games: Snack of healthy carbohydrates, moderate proteins, low fat and fiber. Include at least 10 oz of water

In between games: Include healthy carbohydrates, low protein, and low fat. Granola bars, crackers, high-carb/moderate protein energy bars, dry, whole-grain cereal, fruit, and smoothies are all good choices. Be sure to focus on hydration. On average, consume 5-10 oz of water 15-20 minutes

Within 30 minutes after games: Snack of healthy carbohydrates with lean protein sources (Plain Greek yogurt with berries is an excellent choice)

Post game meal: Healthy carbohydrates, lean protein, and heart-healthy fats. Replace fluids within 24 hours of match



Food is Fuel! To promote optimal performance with more energy, endurance, and focus, try these energy dense foods:

Aim for all-natural ingredients: they will promote better performance and faster recovery.

- *Hydration*-In addition to plain water, try **Capri Sun Roaring Waters**. Unlike Gatorade, this product contains no artificial sweeteners, no high fructose corn syrup, and no artificial colors, preservatives, or flavors.
- *Fruit* (especially **berries**) are excellent food choices for pre, mid, and post exercise. Avoidance of apples, mangos, raisins, and peaches is advisable as they contain fermentable fiber, which can cause discomfort in some individuals, especially during endurance workouts lasting more than an hour.
- *Vegetables* are a great source of long-lasting energy and can provide valuable nutrients for sustained endurance. Good choices are **carrots, cucumber, bell peppers, and snow peas**. Some to avoid (for the same reason listed above) are cauliflower, broccoli, mushrooms, and asparagus.
- *Protein*-Plain yogurt, cheese, hummus, and lightly salted nuts combine great with fruits and vegetables. **Babybel cheeses** are both convenient and excellent sources of protein before and after games. Keeping blood sugar as stable as possible is the ultimate goal for an endurance athlete. Try **Simply Balanced Blue Corn or Rolled Tortilla Chips** as a healthy carbohydrate choice to pair with your protein.
- *Whole grains* (**whole wheat bread, brown rice, quinoa**, etc.) are preferred as they offer energy-providing carbohydrates along with protein, fiber, and healthy fats. Think of white bread and refined carbs as nothing more than sugar, which will deplete energy stores. Mixing 1/2 whole wheat and 1/2 white pasta is a good compromise for those who are slow to adapt a healthier way of eating.
- *Energy bars* with all natural ingredients and appropriate serving sizes are ideal for both essential nutrients and convenience. Two good choices are **Cascadian Farm Chewy Granola Bars** and **Cliff Kid Organic Z Bars**.
- Avoiding candy, cookies, and brownies before and in between matches is a great way to optimize nutrition and performance. Remember, small modifications provide the greatest results!