



St. Joseph's Doora Barefield GAA

Healthy Eating Guidelines for all Members



At St. Joseph's Doora Barefield GAA, we are committed to fostering a healthy, supportive environment for our members of all ages—from underage teams to senior squads—and for the wider community. By promoting healthy eating habits, we aim to make the club a healthier and more enjoyable space for everyone.

Our club is dedicated to a whole-organisation approach to implementing healthy eating practices. These guidelines offer a general framework that can be tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals, teams, and activities. It's important to recognise that nutritional needs vary depending on factors like age, body size, gender, activity level, and medical conditions.

Underage vs. Senior Teams

For **underage players**, nutrition should focus on growth, development, and sustained energy levels for training and games. Balanced meals rich in whole foods will provide the essential nutrients needed for their physical and mental development.

For **senior players**, the emphasis is on fuelling performance, aiding recovery, and maintaining strength and fitness. Senior Players should ensure they are eating a balanced diet to support endurance and recovery, and they may need to adjust their food intake based on training load and match days.

Key Guidelines We Promote: *Healthy Eating Principles ...*

1. **Whole Foods First:**

We recommend that players and parents (guardians) prioritise unprocessed, real foods such as lean meats, fish, eggs, dairy, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Processed foods lack the nutrients necessary to properly fuel the body for sport and daily activities.

2. **Carbohydrates for Energy:**

Focus on whole grains like brown rice, pasta, wholemeal breads, and high-fibre carbs like potatoes or sweet potatoes. These should make up the bulk of your energy intake for sustained performance.

3. **Protein for Recovery:**

Include lean proteins like chicken, fish, eggs, or plant-based sources such as peas, beans, and lentils, which are essential for muscle recovery and growth after training. Dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, are excellent sources of both protein and calcium, essential for muscle recovery and bone health. Low-fat

dairy options are particularly beneficial post-exercise for repairing muscles and replenishing calcium stores, making them a valuable part of a balanced recovery routine.

4. **Good Fats for Health & Muscle Repair:**

Healthy fats are key for overall health and recovery. Oily fish like salmon, mackerel, or sardines should be eaten twice a week for omega-3 fatty acids, while nuts, seeds, avocados, and olive oil also provide excellent fats for muscle function and performance.

5. **Eat with Colour:**

Aim to eat a variety of colourful fruits, vegetables, or salads every day. At least five servings daily will provide essential vitamins and minerals for energy, performance, and health.

6. **Stay Hydrated:**

Hydration is critical before, during, and after training. Players should bring water to training and sip regularly. Sugary drinks like sports or fizzy drinks should be avoided, especially by underage players, unless recommended by a dietitian or GP.

Supplements:

For U18 players, the use of supplements, such as protein powders or creatine, is discouraged unless medically advised. Senior players should follow a **"food first" approach**, focusing on obtaining nutrients from whole foods like lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Supplements should only be used under the guidance of a qualified nutritionist or GP. This ensures safety and maximises the benefits of nutrition for performance and recovery.

Pre- and Post-Training Nutrition:

Players should eat a balanced meal 2-3 hours before training and follow up with a snack containing carbs and protein within 30 minutes after training to optimise recovery.

Food Safety:

Proper food storage and handling should be promoted at all club events and gatherings to ensure player safety and nutrition.

Post-Match Treat Bags for Underage Teams:

In line with our Healthy Eating Policy, we recommend that post-match treat bags for underage teams prioritise healthier options, such as fresh fruit (e.g., bananas, apples) and nutritious snacks. While occasional sweets can be included, they should be limited. This approach encourages healthy eating habits, enhances athletic development, and aligns with the club's goal of fostering long-term player wellbeing.

Summary:

We ask parents, players and coaches to support these guidelines on and off the pitch for optimal health and performance in our Club.

Signed: *Robert Hurley* Date: 25/09/24

Robert Hurley Chairperson, St. Joseph's Doora Barfield GAA Club

Signed: *Evelyn Ball* Date: 25/09/24

Evelyn Ball, Healthy Club Officer, St. Joseph's Doora Barfield GAA Club