



# Sport-Specific Nutrition: Softball

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Softball players tend to have varying levels of training, depending primarily on the time of year. It is important that a player’s food schedule match their training schedule. Once the season begins, games are typically played most days of the week. At the height of softball season, players are not training as intensely so diets should focus on clean, healthy eating. There is little room for high-fat, high-sugar foods.

Nutrition recommendations for softball players should focus on ways to maintain a proper body composition for optimal performance. Successful softball players tend to be strong and powerful. Maintaining a healthy body composition for your position is vital to optimal speed and agility. Softball can involve long hours of low intensity activity with only short bursts of high energy output. To maintain a healthy weight without losing your strength and power follow these guidelines.

• **Focus on nutrient dense carbohydrates.**

Focus on eating carbohydrates that are nutrient dense. Limit starchy, refined carbohydrates that are typically high in sugar and fat. These foods have been stripped of their natural vitamins and minerals with only a fraction of them then getting added back in to the product.

Carbohydrate choice	Better carbohydrate choice
bagel	whole-wheat toast , English muffin or flat bread
rice	quinoa
100 % orange juice	orange
Pop - Tart®	Special K® breakfast sandwich
Soda/sports drink	plain water
candy bar	almonds or peanuts
french fries/ potato chips	baked chips
white pasta	Whole grain pasta

crackers	Veggies and hummus
Sugary cereal	Oatmeal, healthier cereals*
* Healthier cereals found on ICyF “ Athlete Shopping List” guide.	

• **Eat lean protein.**

Eat enough protein to build and/or maintain muscle. Lean protein sources include fat free and low fat dairy products, lean meat, beans and eggs. For a more detailed list, see the ICyF “Athlete Shopping List.” Softball players should consume approximately 1.8 gram of protein per kilogram of bodyweight. To ensure proper intake, work with a sports dietitian/nutritionist.

Weight (pounds)	Approximate Daily Protein (grams)
120	98
130	106
140	115
150	123
165	135
180	147

• **Stay hydrated.**

Hydration before, during and after training and game-time should be well planned, especially given the typical summertime climate. Drinking large amounts of water in the minutes beforehand is not an optimal way to hydrate and can leave you with a “sloshy” stomach in the opening minutes of play. Dehydration (2-3% loss in body weight (1) or less than 3 pounds for a 140-pound player) can affect agility and decrease reaction time. Players should sip small amounts of fluid during training and regularly throughout the day.



#### Hydration Tips:

- Start hydrating about 4 hours before practice or competitions so that you are able to excrete any excess fluid as urine before you compete.
- If you are training for 60+ minutes, sip 4-6 ounces fluid every 15 minutes. A sports drink may be necessary.
- On days where you are training intensely, for every pound lost, replace with 24 ounces of fluid.
- Carry a water bottle with you during the day to help achieve your fluid goals. One sip of water is equal to about 1 ounce.

#### • Fuel properly at tournament time

Being properly fueled before walking onto the field is important. Your pre-game fuel should leave you neither full nor hungry. During tournament time it may be best to have mini meals throughout the day to keep energy levels high and enhance your recovery between games. Snacks such as yogurt, fruit, crackers and nutrition bars should be readily available. Have a team cooler available so that players are selecting healthier options and not limited to what may be available at the concession stand or a nearby gas station. Visit the ICYP "Food to Fuel when on the Move" guide for a list of items to stock in the team cooler.

#### References

1. Position of the American Dietetic Association, Dietitians of Canada, and the American College of Sports Medicine: Nutrition and Athletic Performance. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, March 2009, Volume 109 Number 3 p. 509-522.