SAFE & FAIR SPORT

Safeguarding Policy

Nutrition Guidance for Good Practices



V1/MAR 2025

British Gymnastics | English Gymnastics | Gymnastics Northern Ireland | Scottish Gymnastics | Welsh Gymnastics Gymnasteg Cymru

What's included in the Safeguarding Policy:

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

- Introduction
- The coach's role in nutrition for gymnasts
- Nutrition & Gymnastics
- Fuelling & Gymnastics
- When are the best times to fuel for gymnastics?
- Nutrition & Recovery
- Snacking on a budget

Introduction

- Everyone in gymnastics has a responsibility to create a safe and uplifting gymnastics experience for all. The Safeguarding Policy: Nutrition outlines the mandatory points which clubs and coaches must follow to ensure safe practices around nutrition are implemented.

- This guidance has been developed to supplement the Safeguarding Policy: Nutrition. The purpose of this guidance is to provide clubs with further information to empower them to apply good practice.

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

Useful links

British Gymnastics Safeguarding Policy: Hydration & Guidance for Good Practice

Nutrition and artistic gymnastics – a matter of balance (olympics.com)

Eating Disorder Awareness (CPD module)

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

The coach's role in nutrition for gymnasts

Coaches should only offer generic information on nutrition, which has been provided directly or indirectly* from qualified practitioners (GP, dietitian or nutritionist).

A coach can

Encourage a balanced diet*.

Highlight the importance of fuelling and hydrating for gymnastics and staying healthy.

Encourage the consumption of quality carbohydrate sources to help optimally fuel the body for gymnastics (e.g. fruits, dried fruit, vegetables, unrefined carbohydrates; whole-grains, brown rice, whole oats, potatoes, beans and carbohydrates found in unsweetened dairy).

Encourage gymnasts to fuel during training (e.g. malt loaf, banana bread, oat bars, fruit buns/bread, fruit smoothies).

Encourage good nutritional recovery practices to enable the body to repair and adapt following gymnastics.



A coach should avoid

Providing personal opinions or practices to influence a gymnast's nutrition.

Demonising any food or food types. All foods are 'allowed'.

Indirect comments that could be related to nutrition and body image e.g., comparison of leotard sizes or promoting a specific body type.

*Indirectly refers to clubs and coaches providing information for gymnasts and parents/carers which is sourced from qualified practitioners (GP, dietitian or nutritionist). For example, this could be messaging or info-graphics (see this document which contains examples and resources provided by qualified practitioners working with British Gymnastics, which clubs and coaches are encouraged to use).

Discussing nutritional behaviours

Any conversation on nutritional choices and behaviours should come from a place of understanding not judgement. It is recommended that open questions are used to understand why.

The following resource has been provided by UK Coaching, which includes advice on a coaches role with nutrition. **Lifestyle and Nutrition for Sport | Guide - UK Coaching**.

British Gymnastics also has an **Eating Disorder Awareness CPD module** to provide information and support for coaches.

Any conversations around any concerns should be made sensitively and aligned to the **Safeguarding Policy: Nutrition**.

Nutrition & Gymnastics

Key principles

The food and fluids consumed are the basic drivers to enable the mind and body to take part in gymnastics whilst staying healthy.

Quantity
The quantity consumed will influence growth and development and capacity to withstand the demands of gymnastics, school/education/work and other activities.

Timing
The timing of meals and snacks will ensure energy is available for the brain and muscles when it really needs it.

Quality
The quality of the food consumed will dictate whether sufficient nutrients are available to support the demands gymnasts place on their body and mind.

What's important?

Good habits and a good relationship with food should be nurtured with gymnasts from a young age.

Energy intake
The energy needed for growth, brain function, daily tasks, and gymnastics is high. Energy intake should never be compromised especially during adolescence.

Variety
It is important gymnasts eat a variety of foods from all the major food groups (fruit and vegetables, carbohydrates, protein, dairy and, fats and oils) – this includes treats. Exceptions to this should only be when a gymnast has a medically confirmed allergy/intolerance or is following a vegan/vegetarian/religious based diet.

Protein rich foods
Protein rich foods provide building blocks required for growth, strong bones and muscle repair. Examples include legumes, dairy, lean meats, fish and eggs. Protein powders are not necessary.

Calcium
Plenty of calcium rich (dairy and/or non-dairy) foods are essential for building bone strength. This is particularly important during adolescence to ensure peak bone mass (maximum bone strength) is achieved, which will minimise the risk of bone injuries and ensure optimal bone health later in life.

Vitamin D
Vitamin D is important for everyday body functions and is generated in our skin in response to UVB rays from the sun. As gymnasts spend a lot of time indoors, it is important that they include additional Vitamin D in their diets (this can be found in foods such as oily fish and/or through supplements).

Iron
This mineral plays a key role in brain development, athletic performance, and immune health. Losses are greater in menstruating females. Iron rich foods include mackerel, sardines, eggs, lean red meat. Plant sources are limited, so fortified cereals and legumes are important.

Omega 3 fats
These fats are important for brain development, muscle recovery, heart health and much more. Consume plenty of oily fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines), omega 3 enriched eggs and oils, walnuts and seeds on a regular basis.

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

Fuelling & Gymnastics

Fuelling

To get the most out of a gymnastics session or competition, it is important to fuel the body with carbohydrate rich food.

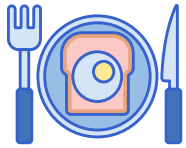
- **Fuel the brain**
  Maintain concentration, focus and capacity to learn and perform skills.

- **Fuel the muscles**
  Generate power and force, sustain energy for gymnastics, prevent muscles tiring.

- **Support your bones**
  Support bone strength.

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

When are the best times to fuel for gymnastics?



2/3 hours before gymnastics → 1 hour before gymnastics

This should be a large meal, rich with carbohydrates, such as wholewheat pasta, noodles, brown rice, wholewheat couscous/ giant couscous, baked potatoes, sweet potatoes, new potatoes, sourdough toast, wholemeal bread/ pita/wraps.

Here are some MEAL IDEAS:

- Porridge with banana and berries.
- Scrambled eggs on a wholemeal bagel/ sourdough toast.
- Wholewheat pasta with a source of protein in tomato sauce.
- Baked potato/sweet baked potato with a filling e.g. tuna, sweetcorn & Greek yoghurt, lean beef chilli, mixed bean chilli, cottage cheese, low sugar baked beans, wrap/sandwich/pitta with a filling e.g. chicken and avocado, falafel and hummus salad, tuna and cucumber.
- Overnight oats: oats and chia seeds soaked in milk & yoghurt with berries/fruit, banana and nuts &/or granola topping.

This is a smaller meal but will depend on an individual's tolerance to food before doing gymnastics.

Here are some MEAL IDEAS:

- For those who struggle to eat solid foods, liquid options may be better: fresh smoothies, yoghurts and potato-based soups or easy to consume soft foods such as Wheat Bisks/ Biscuits and milk.
- If eating isn't an issue close to doing gymnastics, carbohydrate rich options can be eaten: wraps, sandwiches, pasta and rice dishes.



TOP TIP
Low appetite due to nerves before a competition? Keep it liquid with these options.





During gymnastics → After gymnastics

This should be easy to consume and digest, carbohydrate rich foods/fluids 1-1.5hours into a training session and/or when required.

Here are some SNACK IDEAS:

- Bananas, dried fruit (mango, sultanas, apricots etc), non-dairy fruit smoothies (check for those that contain all natural ingredients), oat-based bars (healthy flapjack bars), malt loaf, fruit bread/rolls.

TOP TIP
Low appetite due to nerves during a competition? Keep it liquid: fruit juices, sports gels* and sports drinks.*

* We strongly recommend that you check to see if gels and drinks containing supplements are batch tested and don't contain any banned ingredients (**sport wetestyoutrust.com**).



This could be a snack or meal consumed close after finishing gymnastics to help repair and refuel muscles.

Here are some RECOVERY SNACK IDEAS:

These are good to have if a meal is not planned for soon after finishing gymnastics i.e., within 30 mins (see nutrition and recovery for more ideas!)

- Smoothies made with milk/yoghurt.
- Yoghurt/high protein Greek yogurt with fresh fruit.
- Glass of milk and fruit.



Here are some RECOVERY MEAL IDEAS:

This should be consumed ideally within two hours after finishing gymnastics.

Here's some inspiration:

- Eat a rainbow omelette on sourdough toast.
- Stir fry vegetables with noodles and prawns/chicken/ egg/tofu.
- Curry (chicken, lentil, chickpea, fish) with brown rice.
- Mixed vegetable fajitas with chicken, black beans, prawns, in wholemeal wraps/brown rice & guacamole.
- Thai green mixed vegetable curry with chicken, fish, tofu, tempeh and brown rice.
- Piri piri chicken/ prawns/tofu with seasoned rice and peas and corn on the cob.

TOP TIP
How to create a recovery meal
Source of carbohydrates (pasta, rice, potato, noodle, couscous, bread, legumes) + source of protein (lean meats, fish, eggs, plant proteins: tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils, quinoa) + a range of vegetables that creates colour variety.

Nutrition & Recovery

Recovery

The role of nutrition for recovery is to:

Repair with protein
Remineralise with calcium
Refuel with carbohydrates
Rejuvenate with antioxidants
Rehydrate with fluids

Both carbohydrates and proteins are important for recovery, but protein is the major macro-nutrient involved in building new and repairing old tissue (muscles, bone, skin).

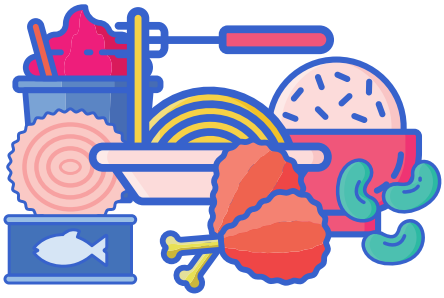


Here are some recovery SNACK ideas:

- High protein Greek yoghurt, a banana, and some grapes. Plus, some water, milk, or juice.
- Mixed fruit smoothie made with milk/ yoghurt.
- Mixed berry oat bar, a banana, and a glass of cows/soya milk or yoghurt.

Here are some recovery MEAL ideas:

- Wholemeal pasta/rice with chicken/ tuna/edamame beans/lentils in a tomato based or pesto sauce. Plus, a glass of cow's milk/soya milk or yoghurt
- Wholemeal seeded wrap filled with chicken/tuna/falafel and salad. Plus, a glass of cow's milk/soya milk or yoghurt.



Optimal protein timings

It can take up to 48 hours for your muscles to fully recover after a hard training session. It isn't just what you eat immediately after training that impacts recovery, but every meal you eat for the next 1-2 days.

NUTRITION GUIDANCE FOR GOOD PRACTICES

Snacking on a budget

Fuelling snacks

What are fueling snacks?
These snacks are carbohydrate rich snacks that are easily absorbed just before or during training.

Top fuelling snacks:

Smoothie
£1.80 (24p per 100ml)
Ideal serving 250-300ml

Malt loaf
£2.50
25p per bar

Banana
16p

Raisins
£3.60 per 1kg



Dried fruit roll
£4.69 for 9
(51p per pack)

Recovery snacks

What are recovery snacks?
These are snacks that are rich in protein to help muscle recover and provide micro-nutrients that are important for repair and growth e.g. calcium.

Top protein based recovery snacks

Milkshake
£1 (20p per serving)

Protein yoghurt's
£1.25 / £1.50

Milk
90p

Homemade Chicken lettuce wrap
(96p per serving)



Top tip
check the price per item or 100ml/g instead of the overall price

Make your money go further

Bulk buying can sometimes seem like a big up front cost, but by bulk buying products you use frequently can work out cheaper per item.

*Prices are guide only based on supermarket prices January 2025 and may fluctuate