

Fuelling right for Success

Top Irish athletes discuss the importance of good nutrition

1st June 2017: *"Eating well is essential and adapting your nutritional intake to your sport is a necessity. In-season or out of season, as well as pre-, during and post-performance, all influence our nutritional considerations."* **Irish and international rugby player Rob Kearney** said today at a special press briefing hosted by the National Dairy Council (NDC) and the Sport Ireland Institute. Other Athletes speaking at the event included rugby player **Dave Kearney**, Boxers **Darren O'Neill and Kellie Harrington**, Diver **Ollie Dingley**, Paralympic Swimmer **Ellen Keane** and runner **Ciara Mageean**.

The NDC has just produced a sports nutrition handbook '*Fuelling Wise for Sport and Exercise*', which is endorsed by the Sport Ireland Institute, and covers a wide range of topics including body composition; carbohydrate; protein; fat; recovery nutrition; hydration and the role of milk as part of an active lifestyle. This booklet launch comes as we prepare to celebrate **World Milk Day on 1st June**. Now in its 16th year, World Milk Day is a day established by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations to recognise the importance of milk as a global food. One of themes for this year is to celebrate milk for its health and nutritional benefits.

Indeed, it is because of its unique package of nutrients that interesting research is emerging around the specific benefits of milk in sport, with potential roles in the areas of recovery nutrition being explored.

"Research is exploring specific areas of interest for milk in relation to rehydration and muscle recovery, as milk naturally contains nutrients to address these post-exercise priorities. Milk is rich in protein – an important nutrient for muscle growth and maintenance – while also providing a natural carbohydrate source to help refuel energy stores; as well as electrolytes in a fluid form to assist rehydration. Additionally, a daily glass of milk provides a number of vitamins and minerals with important roles for health such as calcium, phosphorus, potassium, iodine, vitamin B2 and vitamin B12." **said Nutritionist Caroline O'Donovan of the NDC.**

Recover well to play well

Effective recovery from an intense exercise session or match is essential to perform well in the next training session, match or competition. After exercise, there are three main priorities to consider, often referred to as the 3 'R's of recovery: Refuel energy stores; Repair muscles; and Rehydrate.

As the body replenishes carbohydrate stores (glycogen) at a faster rate immediately after exercise, aim to eat carbohydrate-based foods with some protein within 30-60 minutes after exercise to begin

refuelling energy stores and assisting muscle repair. Follow up with a substantial meal based on carbohydrate foods such as bread, pasta, rice or potatoes; paired with lean protein sources such as meat, fish or poultry; and include a variety of vegetables to contribute to vitamin and mineral intakes.

Ensure you are hydrated before beginning an exercise session and rehydrate afterwards to replace fluid lost e.g. 400-800 ml per hour of exercise completed.

Getting the basics right

Whether you are an elite athlete, involved in a local sports club or a dedicated gym bunny; a healthy, balanced diet is essential for meeting energy and nutrient demands. A variety of factors influence our individual nutritional needs such as gender, age and body size. The type, amount and timing of food will also depend on the competitive level you are involved in and the specific demands of your training schedule.

The first step for optimum performance nutrition is to ensure that nutrient needs are met by including a variety of nutritious foods across meals and snacks. The Department of Health's Food Pyramid is a useful tool to guide balanced, healthy eating choices (see www.healthyireland.ie). The second step is to focus on the timing of food and fluid intakes around training sessions, matches and competitions.

Dr Sharon Madigan, Head of Performance Nutrition, Sport Ireland Institute said *“Paying attention to eating and drinking habits can impact greatly on the performance of all athletes at all levels. Food is an effective performance enhancer in many ways. It provides us with energy, it builds and rebuilds the body and it can deliver nutrients that are the building blocks of many of the physiological processes involved in exercise. Training plans rarely stay static so neither should your nutrition routine. All athletes will benefit if they tailor their food intakes to suit their own individual needs and are aware that these needs can change throughout the training and competition seasons”*.

For further information and for a copy of “*Fuelling Wise for Sport and Exercise*” please contact Cathy Curran, Communications Manager at the National Dairy Council on ccurran@ndc.ie or 01-290 2451