Nat Cook’s Top Nutrition Tips

Olympic Gold Medalist and former Australian Volleyball Schools Cup participant Nat Cook shares with us some nutrition advice for winning athletes.

The Schools Cup is a long, busy and strenuous week. Being away from home, it is easy to slip into poor eating habits. When you are at stadiums and with your friends, there are a number of excuses we can use to but if you are serious about having a gold medal around your neck at the end of the event below are some tips to help you out. All it takes is a bit of thought and preparation. It is well worth spending a little bit of time understanding what will be required to ensure you have a successful week!

Nat’s top tips for being at your best come final day

- The travel to Melbourne can be taxing on your body – ensure that you eat well and drink plenty of fluids (especially water) on the road so that you arrive in Melbourne ready to compete.
- Water is your new best friend, drink drink drink, and when you think you’ve drunk enough - drink some more! You probably need to drink about 10 glasses a day. But make sure you are only using your own drink bottle and getting water from clean sources.
- Buy cereal bars, healthy wheat biscuits, dried fruit and other healthy snacks at home and pack them to take to Melbourne. This means you have decent snacks to take with you each day. We all know that volleyball never goes to plan, so your 3pm match may not start till 6pm, if you have some snacks with you, you can fuel up and be ready to play regardless of your start time. (handy tip – take some zip lock bags so when you open your dried fruit you don’t have to eat it all at once and you can put it in a re-sealable bag.)
- Refuel by making sure you have a snack within 30 minutes of your match completing. This tops up your glycogen stores and helps with recovery. Snack ideas include fruit, muesli bars, a sandwich, vita-wheat biscuits or yoghurt.
- Try to eat as you would normally at home, if you usually have muesli and yoghurt for breakfast or vegemite on toast, don’t go having a full breakfast of bacon, eggs and hash browns before your 9am match, trust me it wont feel good when your diving around in the back court.
- Limit your intake of fatty or high sugar foods and fizzy drinks. These will leave you feeling lethargic and slow, not what you are need to put in a medal winning performance.
- Pastas and rice dishes with lots of veggies followed by fruit are great options for a main meal, these will give you lots of long lasting energy to get you through the day and the week.
How you fuel, and look after yourself on and off the court during the week will certainly affect your on court result at the end of the week, as well as how you feel once you get to Friday afternoon.

For more information on nutrition during tournaments, volleyball specific advice plus a heap of recipe ideas visit [www.ais.org.au/nutrition](http://www.ais.org.au/nutrition)

Check out Natalie’s websites

[www.nataliecook.com](http://www.nataliecook.com)

*Photos of Natalie courtesy of Delly Carr Sportshoot*