

Nutrition Knowledge and Pre-competition Dietary practices of under-14, 7-a-side Championship Football Players across India

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the nutrition knowledge and pre-competition dietary practices of under-14 football players across India. Football players (n=110) were selected using random sampling, at a 5-day under-14 football championship, nutrition knowledge assessed using the validated nutrition questionnaire. Dietary practices pre-competition studied through participatory observation cum informal interview method. The results revealed that the mean nutrition knowledge was 26%. Selection of food items pre-competition, fluid and electrolytes had varied misconception. Consumption of junk foods, skipping of pre-game meal was frequently observed. Significantly higher nutrition knowledge of players belonging to the teams of Delhi and Kolkata was observed as compared to the total scores on the nutritional knowledge between several teams based on the demographic profile. Significance was calculated using ANOVA. Football players lack adequate sports nutrition knowledge and pre-competition meal selection, nutrition education is needed for optimum performance.

Keywords : Sports nutrition; Football; Nutrition knowledge; Dietary practices.

Introduction

Football players know the principles of physical training, but they often neglect the equally important principles of nutrition. Football is game characterized by fast pace with short bursts of high intensity sprints, with many changes in direction, tackling, passing interspersed. Youth players have high energy demands as they are moving through an important physiological stage of life, as well as are training and competing in their chosen sports. Studies have suggested that sports players often have inadequate nutrition knowledge and poor nutritional habits which has a negative impact on their performance.

The knowledge of the nutritional value of food and fluids and the necessary skills to implement appropriate nutritional strategies into daily training and competition has significant positive effects on the players performance levels. A Pre-competition meal is very important to ensure optimum performance, research suggests high carbohydrate, moderate protein and low fat meal options are preferred for better speed and agility. It is also evident that even a slight 2% reduction in hydration status leads to a 20% decreased performance. Less research is available on comparison of the nutrition knowledge of football teams across India during an ongoing tournament and reflection of dietary food source selection for the pre-competition meal. Hence, this study was formulated with an aim to determine the nutrition knowledge and pre-competition dietary practices of under-14 football players across India.

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Methodology

Football players (n=110) were selected using random sampling, at a 5-day under-14 youth