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Rugby Nutrition:

Combatting fatigue

Fatigue can have many causes. Over-training and inadequate recovery strategies, poor diet, stress and lack of sleep should all be considered if you suffer from any of the following symptoms:

- ✓ Drop in performance
- ✓ Increased feeling of effort
- ✓ Muscle soreness and pain
- ✓ Loss of enjoyment in training
- ✓ Loss of appetite
- ✓ Sudden weight loss
- ✓ Sleep disturbances
- ✓ Low resistance to infection
- ✓ Depression

The following dietary causes can easily be corrected: ^[1]

1. Low energy intakes and crash dieting (addressed in other documents on the BokSmart website)
2. Low carbohydrate intake (addressed in other documents on the BokSmart website)
3. Poor intake of fluid, excessive alcohol and caffeine intakes (addressed in other documents on the BokSmart website)
4. Poor vitamin (Vitamins B and C) and mineral intake (iron and zinc).



5. Nutritional habits that interfere with sleep. For example, drinking large volumes close to bedtime, eating large volumes of food that can cause discomfort before going to sleep and too much caffeine. Consider milk-based drinks before going to bed.

If fatigue persists, further investigations are required.

To improve vitamin intake:

- Enjoy eating a good range of fruit and vegetables – the more colour the better. Aim for an intake of between 5-9 fruits and vegetables per day.
- Boost fruit and vegetable intake by making smoothies, adding them to pizza and bread toppings and to soups and stews.
- Where possible choose fresh produce, especially those in season.
- Frozen vegetables are also a nutritious choice.
- Use little water when cooking vegetables and avoid overcooking.

To improve Iron intake:

- The best sources of iron are red meat including liver, ostrich, game or venison, biltong and mopani worms, followed by dark chicken meat, white chicken meat and fish. Include these foods in the diet at least 5x per week.
- When eating eggs, whole grains, lentils, soya and green leafy vegetables that do contain some iron, add a food rich in vitamin C, because vitamin C increases the absorption of the iron. Foods rich in vitamin C include tomatoes, oranges and lemons, guavas, strawberries, broccoli, and green peppers.
- Buy porridge and cereals that have been fortified with iron.
- Avoid drinking strong tea or coffee with meals since they decrease iron absorption.
- Remember that an iron supplement will not correct other nutritional deficiencies and can be toxic. Only take iron supplements on the diagnosis of an iron deficiency and on the advice of a sports physician or sports dietitian.^[2]

To improve Zinc intake:

- Eat a variety of foods containing zinc such as seafood, red meat, chicken, beans, nuts, and certain types of wholegrains, fortified breakfast cereals and dairy products. ^[3]

For more information on *Rugby Nutrition*, go to the BokSmart website: www.BokSmart.com or to the following link: <http://boksmart.sarugby.co.za/content/eating-and-drinking-right>

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