



take Care
Nutrition

EDUCATIONAL SESSION

Introduction

The Take Care programme focuses on promoting health and well-being through football. It supports national associations, leagues, clubs, other football stakeholders and schools. Each module features a variety of tools offering parents, caregivers, teachers, coaches and staff essential evidence and recommendations to encourage healthier lifestyles and positive habits in children.

While the user guide provides suggestions on how to use, distribute and maximise the impact of each tool, this educational session is a concrete example developed specifically for use with children and young people. This session serves as a ready-to-use resource that can be directly applied or adapted to suit specific needs and contexts, showcasing how the tools can be brought to life in real-world settings.

Proposed session outline

Facilitator(s): Football coach and, if possible, the sports organisation's nutritionist or an expert in the field.

Beneficiaries: Young players (adaptations may be needed based on age group)

Duration: 45 minutes + extra time

Optimal timing: This educational session should ideally take place before or after training sessions to reinforce the way nutrition fuels performance

Objective: To help young players understand the role of nutrition in sports performance, recovery and overall health

Preliminary work:

- **Prepare yourself:** Make sure you understand and thoroughly grasp the contents of the white paper
- **Distribute the pre-session questionnaire:** Distribute short, printed questionnaires (provided at the end of this document) for players to answer before the session to gain insights on their current eating habits and restrictions.
- **Print posters:** Print multiple copies of the posters to be handed in at the end of the session.
- **Print material:** Print the following [suggested material](#) for the proposed small-group activities. Feel free to include additional foods that are common or traditional in your country.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Start with a warm welcome and a brief overview of the session's agenda and objectives.

2. Introductory video

Show the Take Care programme trailer to grab the participants' attention and set the tone for the session.

3. Topic presentation and benefits (5 minutes)

Using the white paper as a starting point, present the main benefits of balanced nutrition. Some of the key takeaways from the white paper are summarised below.

Benefits of a healthy diet

1. **Boosts energy levels** – Good nutrition provides the essential macronutrients and micronutrients that help sustain energy throughout the day
2. **Enhances mood and well-being** – A balanced diet contributes to good mental health by supporting brain function and emotional stability
3. **Improves circulation** – Good eating habits promote healthy blood flow, which supports oxygenation and overall cardiovascular health
4. **Helps you maintain a healthy body mass** – A well-balanced diet helps regulate body weight and reduce the risk of obesity

5. **Strengthens bone density** – Proper nutrition includes plenty of calcium and vitamin D, which lower the risk of osteoporosis and strengthen bones
6. **Supports growth and development** – Balanced nutrition provides the necessary fuel for physical and cognitive growth, which is especially important for young athletes
7. **Maximises athletic performance** – Consuming the right balance of proteins, carbohydrates, fats and water enhances endurance, strength and recovery (use the white paper to explain the different nutrients).
8. **Reduces risk of illness** – Healthy food choices lower the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and other metabolic disorders (terms explained in the White Paper)
9. **Improves immune function** – Proper intake of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants helps strengthen the immune system and reduce your susceptibility to illness
10. **Supports hydration and thermoregulation** – Adequate water intake helps to maintain body temperature, prevent dehydration and ensure proper bodily function
11. **Supports cognitive function and concentration** – A well-balanced diet improves brain function, focus, which can have a positive impact on performance at school or work

4. Activities (20 minutes)

FOOD

- **Small-group activity:** Divide the participants into small groups of five or six. Introduce the concept of the food pyramid and explain how it works: food to eat often is shown at the bottom, going up to food to eat occasionally at the top. Give each group a blank food pyramid and a set of food images (see suggested material at the beginning of this document) and ask them to place the foods on the pyramid.
- **Feedback:** Nominate one person from each group to present their pyramid to the class.
- **Reflection:** Facilitate a discussion, clarify misunderstandings and explain concepts based on the information provided in the white paper.

For an educational session with players already familiar with the topic of nutrition or for a follow-up session, ask the participants to compose the ideal 'athlete's plate' for easy, moderate and hard training based on the United States Olympic and Paralympic

Committee (USOPC) athlete's plate, which you can find in the suggested material at the beginning of this document and in the white paper.

HYDRATION

- **Individual activity:** Have each player stand still for a few moments before trying to balance on one foot. Next, have them spin around five times to simulate the effects of dehydration and then try balancing on one foot again.
- **Feedback:** Ask players to describe how they felt during each attempt (for example, dizzy, unsteady, balanced).
- **Reflection:** Explain how this demonstration recreates the impact of hydration on performance, emphasising that proper hydration helps maintain balance and coordination while dehydration can impair these abilities.

5. Nutrition documentary preview (10 minutes)

Show the documentary showcasing a football legend who highlights the importance of nutrition for maintaining good health. This will reinforce the key message that a balanced diet is essential for a healthy lifestyle.

6. Concluding remarks (5 minutes)

- Wrap the session up by summarising the benefits of healthy nutrition, highlighting practical actions that can be implemented easily and reinforcing the key messages from the documentary.
- Encourage the children to make healthy eating part of their daily routine, and remind them that good nutrition alone is not enough; it must be complemented by regular physical activity, sufficient sleep and other good habits. Emphasise that everything is connected and they need to take a holistic approach to ensure their overall well-being.
- The aim of this session is to help children understand the importance of establishing a healthy relationship with food, to encourage and reinforce a healthy body image and to offer reassurance that body shapes vary but what matters is staying healthy and enjoying food as an act of self-care.

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- Encourage each participant to make a small and feasible commitment based on the lessons learned during the session.
- Give each participant a poster summarising practical ways of maintaining a balanced diet and healthy eating habits, as well as putting some posters up in visible areas.

If you have concerns about a participant's eating habits, be prepared to take action via the appropriate channels.

7. Post-session report for facilitator(s)

- Fill in the post-session report for facilitator(s), which is available via this [link](#) or the QR code below, to share your experience.



This document will evolve based on feedback from users. We therefore encourage you to share your thoughts with us by emailing sustainability@uefa.ch at any time.

Pre-session questionnaire for young players

1. **How old are you?** _____
2. **Which country do you live in?** _____
3. **What is your favourite meal?**

4. **Who does the cooking at home?**

5. **Who does the grocery shopping in your family?**

6. **What snacks do you usually have between meals, if any?**

7. **What do you usually eat before training or matches?**

8. **What do you usually eat after a match?**

9. **How much water do you drink each day?**
 - More than four bottles of water (assuming a standard 500ml bottle)
 - Two to four bottles
 - Less than two
10. **Do you ever feel low on energy during a match or training session?**
 - Yes, often
 - Sometimes
 - No, never
11. **Do you think that what you eat and drink affects your football performance?**

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- Yes
- No
- Not sure

12. **Do you have any doubts or want more information about anything relating to nutrition or training?**

