

THE ENERGY INTAKE OF ELITE GAELIC FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Introduction

The Gaelic games are the most popular sports in Ireland in terms of playing numbers and game attendance. The preparatory demands and the frequency of games means that an adequate energy supply, both in terms of quality and quantity, is essential for optimal performance. The aim of this study was to assess the dietary intakes of elite Gaelic football players during the All-Ireland national football league series.

Methods

Fifteen elite Gaelic footballers (mean \pm SD age, height, mass, body fat: 26 ± 5 years; 187 ± 7 cm; 85 ± 6 kg; 11 ± 1 %) participated in the study following ethical approval and informed consent. Height, body mass and skinfold thickness were measured following standardized techniques adopted by the International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK). Percent body fat was assessed using skinfold measure's of four sites employing the Durnin and Womersley¹ skinfold equation. Each player completed a 3-day dietary record, which was subsequently analysed using the Diet 5 computer program (Univation).

Results & Discussion

The physical characteristics of the players were similar to those previously reported.² The players reported a mean daily energy intake of 14 ± 3 MJ. The contribution of carbohydrate, fat and protein to total energy intake was $54 \pm 4\%$, $29 \pm 3\%$ and $17 \pm 3\%$. Current recommendations for an athletic population are an energy intake of 14 MJ, constituting 60% carbohydrate, 25 % fat and 15% protein.³ The major finding of the study was that Gaelic footballers were not obtaining energy in the optimal proportions.

Conclusion

The results from this study can be used to establish a baseline upon which a nutrition intervention may be constructed. Recommendations for dietary modification should be targeted at individual players only after an assessment of current intake has been made.

References

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