

Food and beverage intake habits in handball players: relationship with gender and competitive level

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Handball is a complex team sport in which numerous factors influence performance. Due to the characteristics of the game, players must have adequate nutrition to meet all nutritional and energy requirements.

Therefore, knowing the food and beverage intake of each player is essential to positively influence performance. In fact, the only study that has evaluated the eating habits of this population revealed that handball players did not meet the recommendations.

On the other hand, another factor that negatively affects performance is alcohol consumption. A previous study conducted in this population concluded that no handball player was in the low-risk category, suggesting the need for more nutritional interventions to prevent the harmful effects of alcohol.

For all these reasons, the aim of the study was to describe and evaluate the food and alcohol intake habits of handball players according to gender and competitive level.

METHOD

A total of 348 handball players participated voluntarily in the study, with an average age of 22.49 ± 4.11 years. The athletes train 3 to 5 times a week and play 1 match per week, usually on weekends. The duration of the training sessions is 2 hours, which means a weekly load of between 6 and 10 hours. Participants self-completed a questionnaire in which intake habits was measured by giving the following choice options: never or less than once a month, 1-3 times a month, once a week, 2-4 times a week, 5-6 times a week, once a day, 2-3 times a day, 5-6 times a day and >6 times a day.

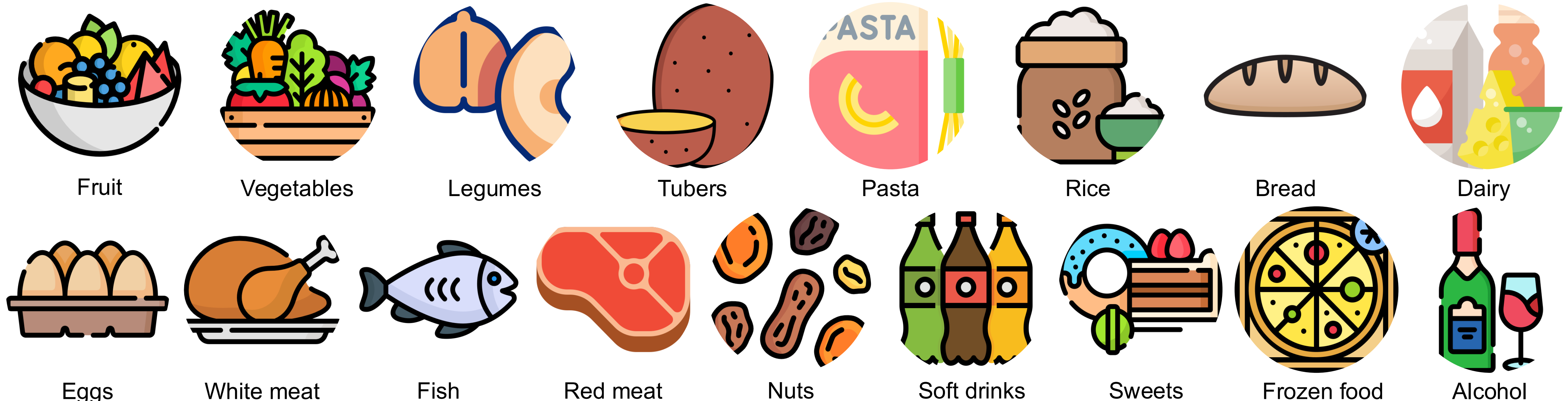


 Women → n = 158
 Men → n = 190



Provincial → n = 98
 National → n = 159
 Honor Division → 91

RESULTS



Significant differences were found for the intake habit of rice ($p = 0.021$), white meat ($p = 0.016$), red meat ($p < 0.001$), soft drinks ($p = 0.011$) and prepared or frozen foods ($p = 0.029$), with men ate more frequently than women in all cases, except for rice, where women ate more frequently.

No significant differences were found ($p = 0.050$), with intake habit less than once a week (47.5% in women and 37.9% in men) and between once and twice a week (45.6% in women and 44.2% in men) being the most frequent.

Significant differences were found for the intake habit of fruit ($p = 0.011$), vegetables ($p = 0.001$), pasta ($p < 0.001$), rice ($p = 0.048$), white meat ($p = 0.009$) and soft drinks ($p = 0.014$). For the intake habit of fruit and vegetables, it can be seen that the players in the honor division had the highest intake habit; for pasta, rice and white meats, it can be seen that intake habit increases as the level of competition increases, with those in the honor division also having the highest intake habit; on the other hand, for soft drinks, the players in the honor division had the lowest intake habit.

No significant differences were found ($p = 0.411$), with intake habit less than once a week (36.7% in provincial, 41.5% in national and 49.5% in honor division) and between once and twice a week (50.0% in provincial, 41.5% in national and 45.1% in honor division) being the most frequent.

CONCLUSION

Men consumed protein-rich foods, such as white and red meat, and foods with lower nutritional value, such as soft drinks and frozen foods, more frequently. In contrast, women consumed foods that are sources of carbohydrates, such as rice, more frequently.

Division of honor players, who have greater physical and nutritional demands, made the best nutritional choices. They were the ones who most frequently consumed foods rich in micronutrients, such as fruits and vegetables; protein foods, such as white meat; and foods that are sources of carbohydrates, such as rice and pasta.

Regarding alcohol consumption, most handball players, regardless of gender and competitive level, drank alcohol at least once or between once and twice a week.

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