

BIOLOGY



Welcome to the first lesson of the week at Football School. We're going to begin with the wonderful – and whiffy! – subject of poo.

Footballers take their digestive systems very seriously. Not only do they need to eat the right food so they stay fit and healthy, they also need to think about their poo. No one wants to be caught out in the middle of a game, as you can't rush to the toilet with 50,000 fans watching you. So top footballers plan when to go to the loo.

FARE PLAY

There are two parts to planning a poo. You need to eat the right sort of food, and you need to eat it at the right time. Footballers have special food doctors – called nutritionists – who make sure they eat properly. Here are two main meals often served before a match:

Chicken with boiled Potatoes and carrots



Fish with rice and broccoli



And here are two meals that would never be served before a match:

Double cheeseburger



AND EXTRA CHIPS

Doughnuts



Food gives you the energy and the nutrients you need to survive. Potatoes and rice are served before matches because they contain lots of carbohydrates, which give you energy. Since you need lots of energy to run around for 90 minutes chasing a ball, footballers will have extra large helpings of potatoes and rice.

Footballers also eat lots of chicken and fish because

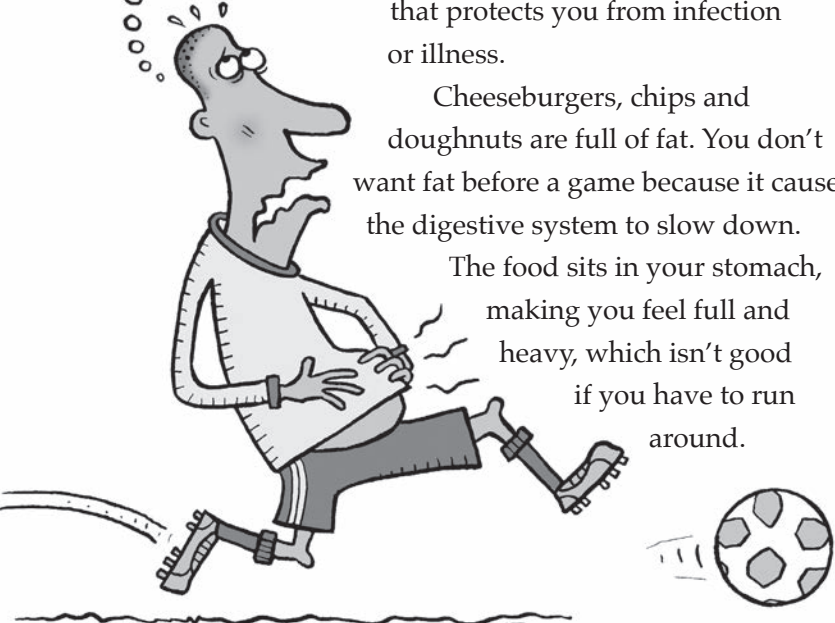
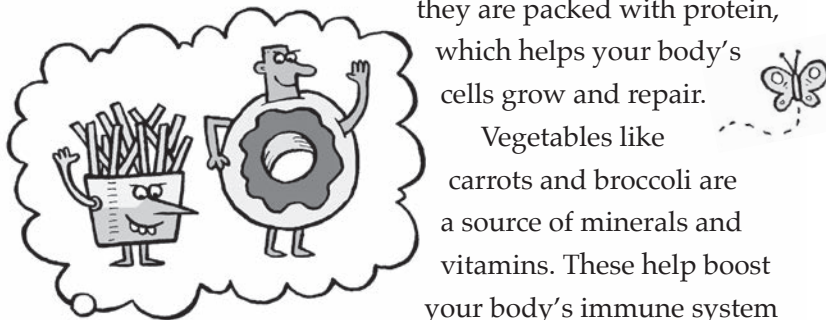
they are packed with protein, which helps your body's cells grow and repair.

Vegetables like carrots and broccoli are a source of minerals and vitamins. These help boost your body's immune system

that protects you from infection or illness.

Cheeseburgers, chips and doughnuts are full of fat. You don't want fat before a game because it causes the digestive system to slow down.

The food sits in your stomach, making you feel full and heavy, which isn't good if you have to run around.



TOILET TIMINGS

In order to perfectly time a poo you need to plan when you eat. Clubs make sure their players eat a meal **THREE HOURS** before a game. This allows plenty of time for the food to pass through the digestive system.

The digestive system is the part of your body that takes in food, breaks it down, absorbs the nutrients and, last but not least, makes poo.

The journey starts with food entering the **mouth**. After you give it a good chew, the mashed-up food plummets down a long tube, called the **oesophagus**, to the **stomach**.

There it is churned around and

chemicals in the

stomach break

down the food, with the help of other organs such as the **liver** and

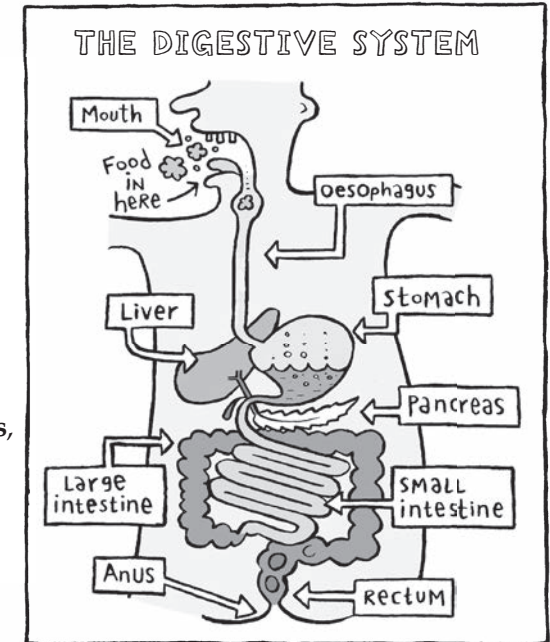
pancreas. The final stage is the **small**

and **large intestines**,

where the nutrients are absorbed into the blood and

what remains is expelled through

your **rectum** and **anus** (your bum) as poo. In an adult, the oesophagus, stomach and intestines – what we call our gut, or **alimentary canal** – is about nine metres long.




GET IT ALL OUT



By the time it's kick-off, a footballer's meal will have been completely broken down and any waste food will be ready to poo out. At one of the biggest clubs in the Premier League, there is a secret, malodorous ritual before a game starts. The players have a pooing procedure. They go to the toilet cubicles in a pre-determined order, partly based on seniority in the team. The most senior person poos first – for obvious, smell-related reasons! Then with empty stomachs they are ready for the game.

But it can be difficult to fix mealtimes (and pooing times) for footballers because kick-offs are spread throughout the day. Weekend kick-offs are at lunchtime or in the afternoon, and midweek kick-offs are in the evening.



Changing kick-offs are very disruptive to the players' digestive routine and a major cause of problems.

CLUB
doctor

TUMMY TERROR

There's another reason why footballers tend to poo just before games, no matter what food they have eaten: fear.

When you get really, really scared, you want to poo. And just before a big match, a footballer will be full of fear. They will be scared of playing badly and losing.

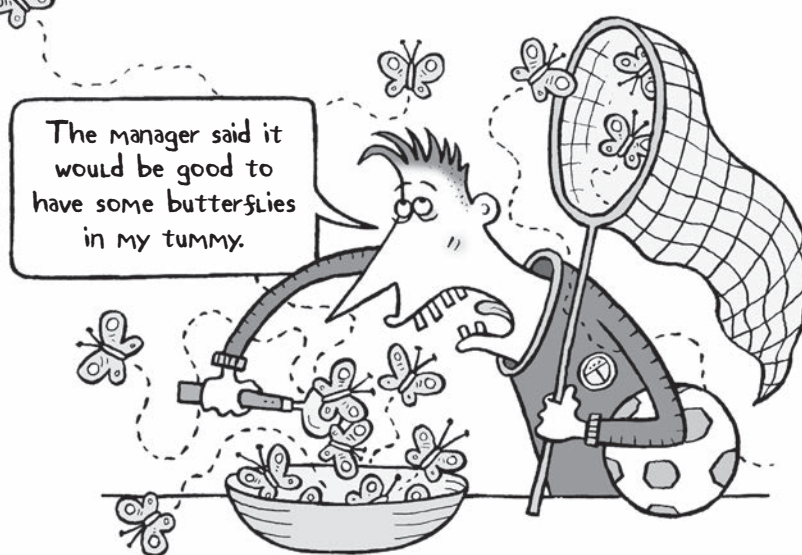
Fear triggers funny feelings in our bellies because of an inbuilt survival system common to all animals. Imagine

you are an animal minding your own business and all of a sudden another, bigger, nasty-looking animal appears in your path. You need to make an instant decision about whether to fight it or to run away. In either case – fight or flight – your muscles must be ready, so the body will start diverting blood to them.



Whenever humans sense danger and get scared, like a footballer before a game or a student before an exam, we respond in the same way. Blood is diverted to our muscles, we produce a chemical called adrenaline and the chemistry of our body is altered, making it feel extra sensitive. This also causes tension in our gut, which is what gives us that butterfly sensation, and can make us flee ... to the loo.

Remember, anyone can get butterflies in their stomachs – even the most famous footballers in the world. And sometimes, despite all this pre-match planning, pooing can still go badly wrong.



The manager said it would be good to have some butterflies in my tummy.

HAVE WE GOT POOS FOR YOU



WIPE

Gary Lineker was one of England's best ever strikers. At the 1986 World Cup, he scored six goals and won the prize, known as the Golden Boot, for top scorer. But the 1990 World Cup started quite, well, poo-ry for him. "I tried to tackle someone, stretched and relaxed myself and erm..." Lineker said of the moment he pooped himself on the pitch against the Republic of Ireland in England's first game of the tournament. "I was not very well, I was poorly at half-time. I was very fortunate that it rained that night so I could do something about it, but it was messy. You can see myself rubbing the ground like a dog trying to clean it. It was the most horrendous experience of my life." There was some good news: the Irish players did not want to get too close to him. "I have never found so much space after that in my life," he laughed.



FOUL

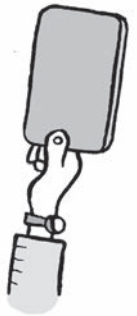
Mexico were drawing 1-1 with local rivals the USA in 2011 and there were just a few minutes left to play when Mexican midfielder Omar Arellano bent down to adjust his socks. As the TV cameras panned in for a close-up, there was a surprise for viewers: a suspicious-looking



brown stain on the back of his white shorts, which was aired around the world.

YUK

"I was on two lots of antibiotics at the time for a kick on my leg, which resulted in an upset stomach," said Welsh midfielder Robbie Savage about the day his Leicester City team played Aston Villa in the Premier League in April 2002. "I had a bad case of diarrhoea on the day of the game, so had to go there and then, and the nearest place was the referee's toilet." It was an expensive decision: the referee, Graham Poll, reported him to the Football Association for "improper conduct" and Savage had to pay a £10,000 fine.



CHEEK

English winger Jason Puncheon ran off the pitch in the middle of the second half during a Premier League game for Southampton against Everton in 2013. He returned a few minutes later with a grin on his face and the fans chanting a song that suggested he had gone for a poo. Puncheon appeared to confirm their suspicions when he celebrated scoring his next goal a couple of weeks later: he ran to the corner flag, bent down and pretended to wipe his bum.



DOGGIE DOO

Football is not the only sport where poo is better out than in. In greyhound racing, it is said that the dog who does a poo just before the start will win the race. Fans like to keep a close eye on the dogs just in case any of them start to squat...



BIOLOGY QUIZ

- Which of the following is **NOT** part of the digestive system?
 - Oesophagus
 - Stomach
 - Liver
 - Nose
- If an adult stretched out his or her intestines they would be as long as:
 - the height of a goal post.
 - the width of a goal.
 - the width of a football pitch.
 - the distance from the centre circle to the nearest toilet.
- How many times will a person fart on average every 100 minutes?
 - 0 times
 - 1 time
 - 10 times
 - 100 times
- What was Brazilian striker Ronaldo caught doing while playing in a match at the 1996 Olympic Games?
 - Eating his bogey
 - Farting in an opponent's face
 - Weeing out of the side of his shorts
 - Burping at the referee
- Wembley Stadium has more toilets than any other stadium in the world. How many does it have?
 - 418
 - 818
 - 1,318
 - 2,618

