

Nutrition Facts

Healthy Eating and Sports

Children and teens who are regularly active may need extra energy compared to less active children. They are usually able to meet their needs for extra energy and nutrients by eating a well-balanced diet.

A healthy meal plan for active children and teens should include¹:

- Enough food for exercise and growth.
- Carbohydrates to act as fuel during sports.
- Protein for growth and to build and repair muscles.
- Healthy fat for growth and to provide energy for sports or activities that last longer.
- Fluids to stay hydrated and prevent dehydration.



Tips for Active Children and Teens to Get Enough to Eat

- Eat regular meals and snacks - three meals per day with three healthy snacks. This will help children and teens get enough food to support growth and development, and to provide energy for activity.
- Pack ready to eat meals and snacks when you are on-the-go so meals won't be missed.
- Include food from all four food groups. The four food groups are **Vegetables and Fruit**, **Grain Products**, **Milk & Alternatives**, and **Meat & Alternatives**. This will help your child or teen get all the nutrients they need.
- Plan ahead. The energy children and teens need during sports comes from meals and snacks eaten ahead of time. Physical performance can be affected if children and teens are not well-nourished and well-hydrated.
- When children and teens eat can also affect performance. See below for ideas and tips.

Eating and Drinking Before Sports¹

Foods and fluids consumed before sports give children and teens the energy needed to be active. They also prevent hunger and dehydration during the game.

- Foods should be easy to digest, familiar and enjoyable.
- Meals should be higher in carbohydrate, moderate in protein and lower in fat.

Pre-Exercise Meal Ideas (2-4 hours before):

- Pasta with meat sauce, salad, milk
- Sandwich with veggies and lean meat, with banana and water

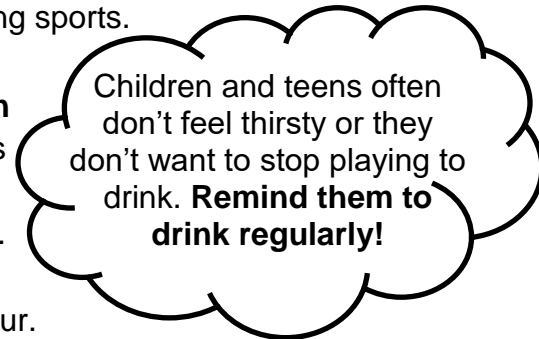
Pre-Exercise Snack Ideas (1-2 hours before):

- Cereal and milk, piece of fruit and water
- Toast with peanut butter and water
- ½ sandwich with veggies and lean meat, water

¹ Canadian Paediatric Society. (2013, April 02). *Sports Nutrition for the Young Athlete*. Retrieved from <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/sport-nutrition-for-young-athletes>

Eating and Drinking During Sports¹

- Drinking enough to stay well-hydrated is most important during sports.
- Water is an excellent choice for most children and teens.
- If the game or activity will be intense and **last longer than an hour**, a sport drink may be needed. They contain electrolytes (minerals, like salt and potassium) to replace what is lost during sweating. They also contain carbohydrates for energy.
- Children and teens may also need a small snack, like a piece of fruit or some crackers, if active for longer than an hour.
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, like energy drinks. These can cause dehydration.



Eating and Drinking After Sports¹

Carbohydrates, protein and fluids are needed as soon as possible after sports and activities. This is really important if the child or teen plans on being active the next day. The meals and snacks we eat and drink after exercise help give us energy, replace fluids lost during sweating and help build and repair muscle.

Post-Exercise Snack (immediately after):

- Cereal with milk and fruit or
- Vegetables with hummus and milk or
- Fruit smoothie (fruit, yogurt and milk) with whole wheat crackers

Post-Exercise Meal (within 2 hours after):

- Lean steak/chicken/fish, salad, baked potato and milk or
- Pasta with veggie and meat sauce, whole wheat bun, milk and piece of fruit

Snacks for the Whole Team

If it is your turn to bring snacks for your child's team, keep the following tips in mind:

- Choose nutritious foods, like fruit and vegetables, or lower fat dairy products.
- Keep food safety in mind. Use ice packs to keep foods cold, if needed, and wash your hands before preparing.
- Don't forget about food allergies. Some teams may ask for peanut-safe snacks to protect kids with food allergies. Check with your child's coach for any foods to avoid because of allergies.
- Bring water, ready to eat vegetables or fruit, yogurt tubes or lower fat cheese strings.



Resources:

- Healthy Eating Playbook for Coaches - https://www.durham.ca/departments/health/food_nutrition/healthy_eating/recHandbook/recHandbook.pdf