

Player Nutrition



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Establishing good nutrition habits is the responsibility of parents, guardians and athletes for successful performance on the field and in the classroom.

“To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art.”

La Rochefoucauld

Building Healthy Minds for Nutrition

- Foods fuel growth and development
- Children should not “diet” for weight loss
- Unhealthy eating habits can affect growth, limit strength
- Limiting specific nutrients can affect metabolism, lead to an imbalance in important products of nutrition, affect growth and brain development
- Take care with how food is discussed
 - Avoid negative terms for all foods – “bad” “junk”
 - All foods can fit in a healthy intake
 - Foods should be chosen for time of day, activity planned

Athletes, regardless of the level at which they compete, require good nutrition for:

- Performance
- Injury prevention
- Growth and development
- Body composition

Soccer is high intensity, high endurance and requires balanced, healthy diet.

Strength is also an essential component of soccer performance.

Keep it simple, make it healthy

- **Hydration is vital**
- 3 meals, 2-3 snacks as needed for active, growing children
- Kids are **not** little adults
 - What is better for adults may not be good for kids
 - Example – “low fat”, kids need significant, healthy fats for brain and body development

Key Nutrition Concepts for Healthy Athletes

1. Maintaining proper **hydration** and electrolyte balance is essential.
2. Eating a **healthy** diet daily lays the foundation for an athletes training and performance.
3. Nutrition before, during and after exercise has been documented to reduce fatigue, improve performance, prolong endurance, decrease muscle damage and speed recovery.

Carbohydrates	Protein	Fat
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple sugars – used quickly; not a great fuel source (candy, sweets)• Complex – longer, steadier energy stream (whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds and repairs muscles• Provides long term energy• Lean sources of protein can provide healthier fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Takes longer to digest (can lead to upset stomach)• Required in small amounts for energy and growth

Hydration

- **Don't rely on "thirst"**
 - Thirst is a sign of dehydration
 - Once you are thirsty, your hydration status is already compromised
- Dehydration, even slight, can decrease energy, strength, coordination
- Muscle cramps are a side effect of dehydration
- Hydration is important all day, every day; not just games and practices
- It may sound icky to kids but.....watch your urine!



Hydration

- Drink **water before** activity and every 15-20 minutes throughout
- Failure to replace fluids can compromise performance and safety
 - Decreased strength, speed, stamina, energy and cognitive processes
 - Increase risk of injury
- **Rehydrate** after to restore lost fluids and electrolytes – especially important if another game/practice is lined up
- Sports drinks with carbohydrates and electrolytes can be essential for practices or games lasting more than an hour and during times of humid or hot weather

Before the Big Game(s)

- Meals and snacks the day and night before –
 - **High carbohydrate**
 - Pasta with meat sauce
 - Rice bowl
 - Baked potato with lean meat/veggies
 - Waffles and peanut butter
 - Pizza with veggies
 - Lean meat sandwich
 - Keep it healthy, not an excuse to fill up on sugary carbohydrates!
 - Avoid fatty, fried foods
- **HYDRATE!!**

Getting Started on Game Day

- Breakfast

- Refuels body, replaces energy used overnight, fuels the brain
- Focus on healthy carbohydrates and protein, low fat
- Waffles with peanut butter and fruit, Cereal with milk and fruit, Fruit or yogurt smoothie, toast, Granola bar with milk, fruit, Nut butter sandwich, Oatmeal with fruit, Bagel or English muffin with egg and cheese, Yogurt with granola or cereal and fruit.

- **HYDRATE!!**

Game Day

- **Meal 3-4 hours before activity**
 - Carbohydrates to maximize blood sugar and glycogen stores, avoid hunger feelings and help you think clearly
 - What a player can eat, and when, is based on the individual
 - See what works best for you and adjust
 - Moderate protein with low fat and low fiber
 - Avoid high sugar foods and drinks
- **If less than 3 hours before activity**
 - Lighter meal or snack with carbohydrates and some protein

Snack ideas

- Homemade trail mix with nuts/seeds, granola/cereal, dried fruit
- Apples with nut butter
- Low fat yogurt with fruit or granola
- Smoothies with low fat dairy (milk, yogurt), fruit
- Pretzels, pita wedges and vegetables with hummus
- English muffin/mini bagel with nut butters

During games and practice

KEEP IT SIMPLE.....

Drink WATER

- Older, well-trained athletes may benefit from easy to digest carbohydrates.
 - Examples – carbohydrate gels, raw fruit, bar bits, graham crackers, pretzels, honey

Post game and practice

- Eat and hydrate within 30 minutes after intense activity and again at 2 hours
 - Talking to team/coach, packing up, walking to car, driving home can = 1+ hours
 - Plan ahead with easy post game snacks for the walk to the car/drive home
 - If playing another game – all of the previous recommendations apply
- Protein rebuilds and repairs muscle depleted during exercise
- Whole grains, dairy – replenish energy stores
- Not high fat, low nutrient, high calorie
- Rehydrate after – replenish fluids and electrolytes

“Energy” doesn’t always mean healthy

- Be careful with energy bars
 - Can be high in sugar, additives, preservatives
 - Low in nutrition compared to calories
 - Should NOT substitute for a meal and/or healthy snack
 - Don’t replace whole foods with bars/drinks
- Avoid carbonated beverages and adult energy drinks
 - Can be full of caffeine, sugar and preservatives
 - Not always healthy or helpful – especially for kids



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