

HEALTHY Eating for Sports

Active kids are healthier kids – and don't forget that good nutrition supports good health and enhances performance. Too often, kids are rewarded after participating in a sporting event with high-calorie, low-nutrient foods like candy, cookies and sugary drinks. This sets a bad example for sports nutrition. It also makes it harder for kids to get the nutrients they need for optimal growth and performance.



What can parents and coaches do?

If snacks are provided during or after a sporting event, consider limiting the choices to fresh fruit and bottled water. Some convenient snacks that are popular with kids include:

Sliced oranges	Strawberries
Grapes	Apples
Bananas	Pears
Sliced watermelon	Plums
Cherries	Cubed pineapple

If you want to offer snacks in addition to fresh fruit, aim for foods that provide some nutritional value with less sugar and fat. Keep portions sensible. Large portion sizes can lead to overeating. Listed below are some convenient items that generally meet the nutrition guidelines developed by Action for Healthy Kids, Minnesota.

- 100% fruit juices
- Popsicles made with 100% fruit juice
- Low-fat white or flavored milk
- Low-fat yogurt and yogurt in tubes
- String cheese (5 grams of fat or less per ounce)
- Whole-grain crackers (5 grams of fat or less)*
- Baked corn tortilla chips*
- Low-fat popcorn (5 grams of fat or less) *
- Quaker Chewy Granola Bars*
- General Mills Honey Nut Cheerios Milk 'n Cereal Bars*
- Nature Valley Chewy Trail Mix Bars*
- Kellogg's Original Rice Krispy Treat Squares
- Natural Ovens Oatmeal Raisin Cookies*
- Teddy Grahams, graham crackers and graham cracker sticks
- Vanilla wafers or animal crackers
- Fig Newtons
- Triscuits*
- Multi-grain Wheat Thins*

*Provides the added benefit of whole grains

Sports nutrition tips for healthy, high-performing teams

Stay well-hydrated. Kids who get dehydrated don't feel well or perform as well.

- Thirst is not a good indicator of need. Encourage kids to drink water before, during and after exercise.
- Have all children bring a bottle filled with cold water to each event.
- For events lasting one hour or less, water is best.
- For vigorous activity lasting 60 minutes or more, sports drinks or diluted juice may improve endurance.

Eat well before the game. Poor food choices before a game can hurt performance. Aim for a habit of healthy eating – every day – for top performance.

- Kids should eat meals at least two to three hours before the event, so they have time to digest the food.
- Include carbohydrate-rich foods, like whole-grain breads, cereals or pasta; and fruit and milk. Avoid high-fat and fried foods.

Refuel after the event. This is important if kids have been working hard twice a day or having trainings and events almost daily.

- To replace the energy stored in muscles (glycogen), it's best to eat some carbohydrate-rich foods and beverages within the first 15 minutes after the event. Eating carbohydrate-rich foods over the next four to five hours can also be helpful.

As a parent, try to be a good role model. Eating and activity habits are formed early in life. You can help your child develop healthy habits so they can reach their full potential.

Brought to you by HEALTHY (Healthy Eating Active Lifestyles Together Helping Youth), a collaborative supporting healthy lifestyles for youth in the South Metro area.

References: The American Dietetic Association, www.eatright.org; Pediatric Manual of Clinical Dietetics, 2nd edition, copyright 2003.