



Fuelling the Young Athlete

Taking part in recreational or competitive sports at a young age helps develop skills, confidence, good health, and fitness. The child and teen years are also important times for growth and development. So how do young athletes get enough fuel and nutrients for their sport and growth needs?

A healthy meal plan for a young athlete should include:

- Enough food energy (i.e. Calories) for exercise and growth
- Lots of carbohydrate choices, such as grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, milk and yogurt. Carbohydrate is the main fuel source for all sports
- Enough protein for growth and to build and repair body tissues. Protein comes from: meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk products, legumes, nuts, nut butters and seeds
- Moderate to low-fat choices so Calories are available from carbohydrates and lean proteins
- Enough fluid for the body's needs and to prevent overheating
- Variety to provide all vitamins and minerals
- Frequent meals and snacks to make sure they get enough energy

Tips for getting enough energy

Active children may need 500 to 1500 more Calories each day than their inactive peers. To get enough energy, kids may need to:

- Eat often with three nutrient rich balanced meals plus three or four healthy snacks each day
- Pack portable nutritious snacks and fluids into the training bag every day

Tips for making healthy choices:

Quality food choices are just as important as quantity!

To help kids make healthy food choices:

- ✓ Encourage them to eat nutrient rich foods from all 4 groups
- ✓ Involve them in menu planning, food selection, and preparation
- ✓ Try the following healthy and tasty menus on the back page

Balanced Breakfasts	Loaded Lunches	Designer Dinners	Superior Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrambled Egg, Rye Toast, Strawberries, Milk • Peanut Butter or Cheese, Bagel, Banana, Vegetable Juice • Whole Grain Cereal, Milk, Blueberries, & Lean Ham or Turkey Bacon, Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Wheat Pita Sandwich with Turkey & Vegetables, Carrot Sticks, Milk & Granola Bar • Soup, Multigrain Crackers, Cheese, Apple, Oatmeal Cookies, Milk or Juice • Roast Beef Whole Wheat Sub, Fruit Salad, Yogurt, Fig Cookies, Juice or Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Wheat Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, Salad, Milk & Fruit Cobbler • Roast Chicken, Baked Potato, Steamed Vegetables & Rice Pudding, Milk or Juice • Stir-Fry Vegetables with Meat, Poultry or Tofu, Steamed Brown Rice & Angel Food Cake with Fruit, Milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheese & Crackers • Trail Mix • Yogurt & Granola • Applesauce & Muffin • 1/2 to Full Sandwich • Hummos & Pita • Banana or Corn Bread • Veggies & Dip • Homemade Pita Pizzas

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Pre-sport eating:

Pre-exercise foods and fluids provide energy, while preventing hunger and dehydration during exercise. Eat meals 2-4 hours before starting activities, and snacks 1-2 hours before sports. Focus on fluids, carbohydrates and leaner protein. Energy drinks and caffeinated beverages are not recommended for athletes before or during exercise as they may interfere with athletic performance and health. Try one of the following pre-sport meals:

Pre-Exercise Meal Ideas (2 – 4 Hours Before Exercise):

- Submarine Sandwich, Milk or Juice
- Oatmeal with Toast and an Egg, Milk or Juice
- Pasta with Meat Sauce, Salad, Water or Juice
- Chicken, Rice, Vegetables, Milk or Juice

Pre-Exercise Snack Ideas (1 – 2 Hours Before Exercise):

- Toast with Peanut Butter, Water or Juice
- Cheese and Crackers, Water or Juice
- Cereal Bar or Granola Bar, Water or Juice
- 1/2 to 1 Sandwich, Water or Juice

During sports:

Staying hydrated is key for all athletes. When exercise lasts longer than an hour, most athletes will need some carbohydrates to keep up their energy and focus. Sips of a sport drink, bites of a sport bar or fresh orange sections are practical solutions to fuel longer exercise sessions.

Kids have a poor sense of thirst and need to be reminded to drink during sports. Dehydration can easily occur as an athlete sweats to cool off while exercising. Water is the best thirst quencher, but many children will drink more when their beverage is flavoured. Regular sips of an unsweetened, diluted juice or a sports drink during exercise are a good choice.

After sports:

To fully recover after activities young athletes should eat carbohydrates, protein, and fluids as soon as possible, especially if the athlete plans on being active the next day! Try the following:

Post-Exercise Recovery Food & Fluid Ideas

- Homemade Shake (Milk, Yogurt, Fruit, Juice), Submarine Sandwich, Water
- Lasagna, Salad, Bun, Milk or Water
- Cereal, Yogurt or Milk, Fruit Salad, Juice or Water
- Lean Steak or Chicken or Fish, Baked Potato, Salad, Vegetable Juice or Milk