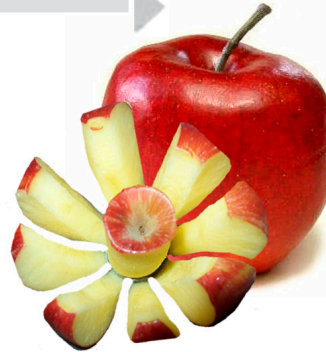


Snacks for Before, During, and After Sports Games and Practice

▶ 1 Before the game or practice

Carbohydrates provide the fuel muscles need for sports activities. One or two hours before the game choose a food from the cereals group which could be their cereal of choice, bread, rice, or pasta. If the game or practice lasts 60 minutes or less, the group with whole grains and oats will also provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber.



During a longer game, exercise session, or practice, it is convenient to add proteins or fiber to slow down digestion and maintain energy. Choose fruits, dairy products, and foods low in fat or protein, such as milk, yogurt, or turkey.

Teaching our children about proper nutrition is fundamental to keeping them healthy and strong, especially if they are physically active. Whether it be for a formal soccer match or to do drills during practice, kids' sports performance and healthy growth will depend on eating the right foods.

Good nutrition is essential for healthy growth and development, as well as sports performance, for children and teens who participate in sports activities in addition to the daily hour of physical activity. Sadly, many children, especially those in critical stages of development, such as during the years prior to puberty, have inadequate eating habits like skipping breakfast or having too many sugary drinks. As a result, their teeth don't have the necessary nutrients for growth and this can affect not only their sports performance but can also put them at risk for sports injuries and affect their school performance and their health.

Variety is important. Foods eaten each day should be enough to satisfy the nutritional needs that the body needs in terms of energy and the necessary substance for organ and tissue maintenance and growth.

Eating well means every day eating a balanced diet made up of healthy foods. An easy way to accomplish a balance between nutrition and variety is to take advantage of the food pyramid groups. In it foods are grouped according to the nutrients they provide and the portions that should be consumed. Larger amounts should be consumed of the foods at the base and less of the ones close to the tip of the pyramid.

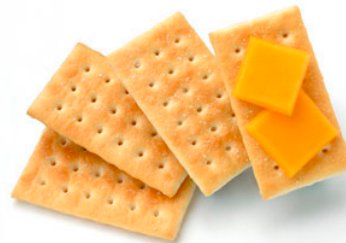
Children should eat from all of the food groups. The type of foods offered as snacks at the right time to those who participate in sports is important. Adequate snacks and hydration are the two main elements of sports nutrition because that is how the necessary energy is provided for maximum performance and recovery.

Pre-game snacks:

- Whole-grain bread, crackers, tortillas, or pretzels
- Cereal (as long as it's not high in sugar)
- Enriched pasta or brown rice
- Plain popcorn
- Low-fat cheese, yogurt, pudding or milk
- Turkey, chicken, tofu
- Apples, bananas, pears, oranges
- Carrots, sugar snap peas, cucumbers

2 ▶ For Half-Time > Refueling

During a game, it's most important to stay hydrated, so keep the water flowing. It is extremely important to be hydrated in order to hydrate muscles and replenish liquids.



Eat 1 to 4 hours before training or competition. Allows enough time for food to empty the stomach. Exercising with a nearly full stomach can cause indigestion, nausea, and vomiting.

Avoid fatty foods, such as many popular breakfast foods (bacon, sausage and cheese). These foods slow emptying of stomach, which may make your child feel sluggish and heavy.

Avoid caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea and some sodas) that can cause agitation, nausea, muscle tremors, palpitations and headaches that can impair performance and, because caffeine is a diuretic, can contribute to dehydration, reduced endurance and put them at risk of feeling sick in hot weather.

Avoid extra-sweet foods such as soda, candy, sports and energy drinks. These cause a spike in blood sugar. If sugar levels then drop quickly during a game, your child could become sluggish or even dizzy.

During this recess it is necessary to eat something easy to grab, eat and digest. Avoid salty foods, since they dehydrate instead of re-hydrating.

Fruits are the best choice since it contains lots of water; they are rich in carbohydrates which provide energy, and their nutrients include vitamins and minerals to ensure proper growth, development, and overall body functioning.

Half-time snacks:

- Bananas (cut in half for younger kids so they can peel and eat more quickly)
- Orange slices
- Clementines
- Grapes
- Small slices or chunks of melon
- Apple wedges (sprinkle with orange juice to prevent browning)



3 After a Game or Workout

Immediately after an intense game, it is necessary to replace the liquids lost by sweating. Water, either plain milk or chocolate milk, and fruit juices are good options. But for activities lasting 60 minutes or longer, or to recover from heavy perspiration, sports drinks are recommended because, in addition to liquids, they provide carbohydrates and minerals and replace the electrolytes lost through sweat.

4 Post-game

It is important to replace the nutrients that the body used during physical activity. To replace them, a snack should be eaten thirty minutes after the activity. Carbohydrates and proteins help recover energy. A little bit of sugar is fine, but not in excess. It is not convenient to reinforce the notion that something sweet is a good way of rewarding oneself for being active.



Snack ideas for recovery after training, the game, or practice

- Fresh fruit (see list above) or applesauce
- Fruit frozen into kabobs or pops
- Dried fruit, including leathers or roll-ups made with 100% fruit
- Fruit-flavored gelatin



Dairy foods such as milk, cheese, and yogurt - provide carbohydrates, protein, and important vitamins and minerals. Calcium and vitamin D are very important for athletes because they build strong bones and are involved in muscle contraction.

- Granola bars, but watch out for high calorie, fat, and sugar content
- Cookies: Best choices are fig bars, oatmeal cookies, animal crackers
- Crackers or bagels: Opt for whole-grain versions if you can; top with peanut butter, cheese or cream cheese
- Yogurt
- Pudding
- String cheese
- Popcorn, pretzels, baked chips
- Muffins (low-fat)
- Trail mix (with dried fruit instead of candy; beware nut allergies)

If it is your turn to take snacks and beverages for a team, find out if the children have any food allergies to avoid taking dangerous foods. Examples are allergies to nuts, walnuts, and peanuts.

Just as drinking water is extremely important to stay hydrated and recover, there are also two nutrients that are particularly important for active people to monitor. Iron is important for oxygen transport in the blood. Low iron content causes fatigue and diminished performance. Iron is found in red meats and enriched grains. Calcium is important for bones and muscular contraction. Calcium deficiency can raise the risk of fractures because the body uses calcium from bones for muscular contraction. Three to four portions of dairy products daily will help provide an adequate amount of calcium. Taking a multivitamin daily can help also. Be sure to choose a vitamin appropriate for age. Children should never take adult vitamins.

Good nutrition can generally be achieved by consuming a variety of foods from different food groups throughout the day. For all kids, listening to the body's hunger and fullness cues will help ensure adequate nutrition. Choose healthy foods, eat when you're hungry, and stop when you're full!