



NUTRITION FOR YOUR LITTLE ATHLETE

What are the biggest nutrition concerns for kids who play sports?

Nutrition plays a large role in academic and athletic performance. On top of this, kids need the right amount of nutrition to promote healthy growth. You can work with your pediatrician or dietitian to determine if your child is meeting his or her nutritional needs and has adequate growth.

1. Protein

Protein is extra important for little athletes who are using their muscles during a time of growth and development. Make sure your child is getting a good source of protein with all his or her meals.

Sources of protein include: meats, nuts, beans, peanut butter, eggs, fish and dairy.

Dairy such as milk and yogurt are especially good snacks for after practice or games. There is often no need for expensive protein shakes. Dairy has protein, calcium and carbohydrates to help muscles repair and build strong bones.

**Child Sports
Nutrition**

Protein

Carbohydrates

Hydration

Healthy Snacking

MORE RESOURCES

Eatright.org

Choosemyplate.gov/kids

Nutrition.gov

Kidshealth.org

MyPlate Kids' Place



2. Carbohydrates

Think of carbohydrates as quick fuel. Sources are: fruit, potatoes, bread, pasta and rice.

Not all carbohydrates are created equal. Whole grain carbohydrates provide longer lasting fuel and needed fiber. Slowly add in whole grains into your child's diet such as whole wheat bread, brown rice and oatmeal.

A piece of fruit is a good snack before or during exercise to provide quick energy.

Candy and snacks with added sugars might provide some fuel but they are lacking in other nutrients that will help athletic performance and promote healthy growth.

3. Sports Drinks

Kids who participate in sports may need extra fluid due to losses in sweat. Before a practice or game, children need at least one cup of water and then 4-6oz of fluid every 15-30 minutes during exercise. After the event, even more water is needed (2-3 cups) to replenish fluids. Many sports drinks often have too much sugar and are just not needed. If your child has an event that requires over 60 minutes of continuous exercise; dilute a sports drink with water to help them hydrate. Signs of dehydration include dark urine, muscle cramps, nausea, clammy skin, dizziness and flushed face.

4. Healthy Snacking

Children require frequent meals and snacks. Kids who play sports may have even higher energy needs because of their activities. Snacks can bridge gaps between practice and meal times. A snack with a good source of protein and carbohydrate or healthy fat provides long lasting energy. Start with protein such as boiled eggs, cheese, peanut butter or yogurt. Pair protein with whole grain crackers, veggies, fruit or other snack foods that your child enjoys. Prepackaged snacks are convenient but can be high in sugar and low in important nutrients.

