



Sport Nutrition

Tip of the Month | May 2011



Nutrition Tips for Parents ...

“Parents Need to Eat to Compete too!”

The Sport Nutrition program has been developed to help keep athletes as healthy as possible and to provide advice to benefit optimal performance, but what about those who support them? As a parent supporting a young athlete, you have an important job too -- making healthy food choices while acting as a positive role model for your rising star! From your everyday meals to meals eaten while travelling to tournaments, meets and games, it's important to consider not only what your child will eat but what **you** will eat. Here are some tips to help guide your choices.

Timing & Balance

Aim to eat something every 3-4 hours, even when you're on the sidelines. This will help manage your appetite, prevent low blood sugar and decrease cravings for junk food. Each time you eat, aim for a vegetable or fruit or whole-grain combined with some protein, and be sure to drink plenty of water. To help avoid “boredom eating”, keep your snacks in a bag, cooler or locker, out of sight.

Packing a Cooler

You probably already do this for your athlete but what about you? Whenever possible, packing healthy meals and snacks will help you stay well nourished. Too often sporting venues do not offer healthy choices and therefore you can get stuck eating fried or processed foods. Here are some excellent portable options:

- Sandwiches, pitas or wraps with lean meats or fish;
- Salads with grilled meats or fish;
- Yogurt or cottage cheese with fruit;
- Fresh cut vegetables and fruit for snacking;
- Leftover soup, hot food or stews in a thermos;
- Cold, grain-based salads with veggies and beans for protein;
- Hummus with vegetables or whole-grain crackers or pita.



AIM TO EAT SOMETHING EVERY 3-4 HOURS.



Healthy Non-Perishable Snacks

Sometimes having access to a fridge or a cooler for the entire time away is difficult. Here are some non-perishable options you can bring:

- Dry-roasted, unsalted nuts and seeds (remember that ¼ cup is one serving);
- Dry cereal (look for those with 4g fibre or more, and less than 8g sugar per serving);
- Air-popped popcorn (season with salt-free herb & spice blends);
- Dried fruit bars;
- Granola bars (look for those with more fibre and protein to keep you full);
- Sandwiches, pitas, or wraps with nut butter and dried fruits;
- Mini cans of tuna and salmon or fish-based salads.





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Road Side Stops

Often it's inevitable that you'll need to make a stop for some extra food or eat meals out at restaurants. Here are some healthy options:

- Grilled chicken on a bun with or without a simple side salad;
- Single patty burger without bacon/cheese;
- Skip fries, order a salad or a baked potato with salsa;
- Meal-sized salads (order dressings on the side and limit fried meats);
- Always ask for whole-wheat breads, buns, wraps, etc.;
- Turkey, chicken, and ham are the leanest deli meats;
- Choose mustard over mayo and other dressings;
- Broth-based soups and chili;
- Whole-grain bagel or English muffin with sliced cheese and tomato or peanut butter;
- Oatmeal with nuts and dried fruits;
- Fruit & yogurt cups;
- Grilled fish, chicken or lean cuts of beef served with stir-fried or steamed vegetables.

If you are dining in at a sit down restaurant with table service, be wary of the portions that may be served. Even if the meal is generally healthy, it can often be double the size that you require.

Healthy Hydration

Staying well hydrated can help you feel more alert and have more energy. Drink enough fluids to produce pale-lemonade coloured urine. Focus on water, low-fat milk, teas or diluted 100% fruit juices and limit the following high-calorie or high fat* beverages:

- Pop and sweet drinks;
- Specialty coffee drinks (hot or cold)*;
- Milkshakes*;
- Fruit juices.

Coffee is a popular choice for parents on the sidelines. Stick to a maximum of 3-4 6oz cups of caffeinated coffee each day (Health Canada recommends no more than 400mg of caffeine per day). Remember that coffee can add calories and fat quickly when prepared with cream and sugar. To avoid this challenge, go for less sugar and low-fat milk instead. Herbal, decaffeinated, or regular teas can be a great alternative, especially at cold arenas.

Other Healthy Habits

- Bring your shoes and head out for a walk, jog or workout if the facility your athlete is competing at offers this. This also can help relieve some of the stress/pressure!;
- Make it social by inviting other parents to do the same;
- When staying overnight, if possible, consider doing group meals where parents get together and prepare meals using crock pots or simple cooking equipment;
- Research ahead and find restaurants that offer healthy choices and may even accommodate your requests.

It is important that you look after yourself during sporting events and training, but also that you model good nutrition for your young athlete. Remember: “you are what you eat” and one should: “eat to compete”!



“IT’S IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER NOT ONLY WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL EAT BUT WHAT YOU WILL EAT.”

