



## Fuel Your Body for Game Day

*Selecting food and beverages that are healthy can definitely improve your game!  
College and professional athletes have meal plans developed by trainers and nutritionists,  
and you might be wondering how you can teach your child to eat right to perform well.*

*These simple tips should have your young athlete off and running towards your healthiest season ever!*

### Pre-game

Eating healthfully is crucial for any athlete. Participating in sports requires energy, but it also important to give your body time to digest your food before you jump onto the field! Also remember to eat enough to satisfy your body for about 3 hours. A good pre-game meal consists of the following:

- Complex carbohydrates with fiber, such as whole grains bread, cereal, pasta, crackers, or oatmeal
- Low-fat protein foods like lean meat, peanut butter, string cheese or eggs
- Plenty of water! Be sure to drink plenty of water to both stay hydrated and help your body digest your food. Pre-game meals should *not* include sports drinks!

What not to do:

- Avoid high fat meats, sweets, spicy food, large salads and caffeine
- Game day is not the time to try a new food!

### Pre-game Breakfast Ideas

- Eggs, oatmeal, berries, juice
- Egg and cheese sandwich on a bagel or English muffin, a piece of fruit, milk
- Whole grain cereal with low fat milk, fruit, juice
- Pancakes, yogurt, juice
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It's okay to have a snack one hour before game time. Quick and easy pre-game snacks include:

- Granola bars, graham crackers, wheat crackers, raisins, dry cereal, yogurt, fresh fruit
- For your drink, water is the best option!

### Afternoon Event

The young athlete should fuel three times before an afternoon game. Start with a small meal when you wake up, follow with another small meal three or four hours before the game, and finish with a fueling snack an hour before the game. Fruit, vegetables, sandwiches (peanut butter and jelly, lean meats, cheese, etc.) on whole grain bread, and cheese snacks are a few great lunch choices.

## Half Time

Push fluids and carbohydrates at half time. If your child has to have a snack, orange slices work great!

## After the Game

Recovery nutrition within 30 minutes after an *intense* game or practice session is vital to restore energy and repair muscle. It is most important to replace energy with carbohydrate rich foods and fluid. Try crackers, bread, yogurt, fresh fruit, granola, cereal, milk and water.

## Tournament Play

Start fueling the night before with a healthy dinner of complex carbohydrates, lean protein and plenty of fluids. Some good choices are whole wheat pasta with lean meat sauce and a small salad or grilled chicken with brown rice and vegetables.

It's important to keep fueling if your child has more than one game a day. Proper snacking will provide muscles the energy they need throughout the day. As a general rule, consume a medium-sized snack like a half-sandwich and fruit or yogurt every hour if your next game is two hours away. Replenish your muscles with protein by having a snack with small amounts of meat, peanut butter, cheese or nuts. As always, stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water.

## A Case of the Nerves

If your child feels too nervous or excited before the game to eat, remember that skipping nutrition is *not* an option. Try snacking on bland familiar foods like crackers, noodles, rice, pretzels and toast. Juice, sports drinks, water and low-fat milk are good fluid options if you are having trouble eating. Avoid high-fat foods like candy bars, fried foods and chips.

## Stick to the Basics

Proper nutrition for the young athlete is easy when you know the basics:

- Eat about five times a day (breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, dinner).
- Never skip breakfast.
- Consume lots of healthy high fiber carbs but don't forget protein. Active bodies need it for muscle recovery.
- Proper portions – Eat a portion that will keep you satiated for only three hours.
- Get plenty of sleep – Sleep impacts weight control, energy level, caloric intake and hydration.
- Choose sports drinks over water when you are sweating a lot, it's hot outside, and the session lasts more than an hour.
- Young athletes need iron, calcium and antioxidants, so eating healthy is extremely important for your body to perform its best.
- Hydrate continuously! Drink plenty of fluids that do not contain caffeine.