

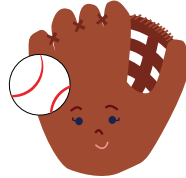
# Keep Your Kid in the Game!



## The Benefits of Youth Sports and Exercise

Social, Academic, and Psychological Benefits:

- Better grades in school
- Enhanced social skills
- Prevents drug/alcohol abuse
- Less likely to smoke
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Healthier body image
- Stronger bones
- Enhanced strength
- Improved athletic ability
- Increased power
- Increased speed and agility
- Reduced chance of injury
- Recover twice as fast from injury



## Nutritional Needs of Young Athletes

Nutrition is a major component of training due to: growth and development, optimal performance, preventing injuries and other problems that may arise due to nutrient deficiencies.

Kids who eat healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks will get the nutrients needed to perform well in sports.

The MyPlate food guide ([www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)) can provide guidance on what kinds of foods and drinks to include in your child's meals and snacks.

## Young Athletes Need Extra Energy

The child athlete, however, has higher energy and fluid requirements. Kids need 20-30% more energy than adults for the same exercise activity.

Most athletes will naturally eat the right amount of food their bodies need. But if you're concerned that your child is getting too much or too little food, check in with your child's doctor.

In addition to getting the right amount of calories, it takes a variety of nutrients to keep young athletes performing at their best.

## Vitamins and Minerals

Calcium and iron are two important minerals for athletes. Calcium helps build strong bones to resist breaking and stress fractures. Calcium-rich foods include low fat dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese, as well as leafy green vegetables such as broccoli. Iron helps carry oxygen to all the different body parts that need it. Iron-rich foods include lean meat, chicken, tuna, salmon, eggs, dried fruits, leafy green vegetables, and fortified whole grains.

## Protein

Complete and adequate protein is needed for optimal lean body mass gain and repair. Most kids get plenty of protein through a balanced diet. Strong muscles come from regular training and exercise. Protein-rich foods include fish, lean meat and poultry, dairy products, beans, nuts, and soy products.

Recommendations:  
0.8-1.0 grams per kg of body weight\*  
\*weight in lbs/2.2 = weight in kg



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## Carbohydrates

Carbs provide energy for the body. Some diet plans have urged weight-conscious adults to steer clear of carbs, but for a young athlete they're an important source of fuel. When you're choosing carbs, look for whole-grain foods like whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, whole-grain bread and cereal, and plenty of fruits and vegetables.

Recommendations:

5 - 6 grams per kg of body weight (depending on volume and intensity of training)

## Fat

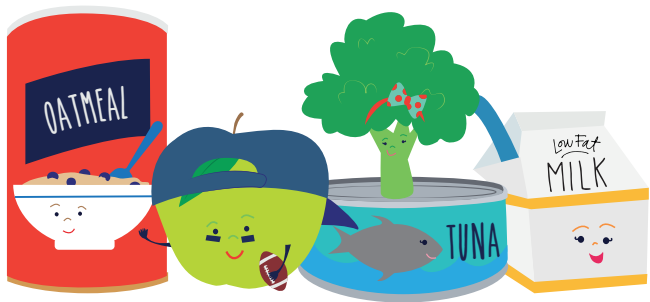
Children utilize more fat than carbohydrates compared to adults during and after exercising at the same relative intensity. Young athletes trying to lose weight may overly restrict fat (e.g. whole milk) intake which can result in a host of problems:

- Inadequate energy intake
- Impaired growth and development
- Insufficient intake of essential fatty acids and fat-soluble vitamins

Complete elimination could affect protein intake and associated nutrients, including calcium, magnesium, chromium, B12, iron, zinc and vitamin D. Good sources of healthy fats include olive oil, flaxseed, peanut butter, nuts, avocados, fatty fish (salmon, tuna etc.), and milk.

Recommendations:

- 25% to 35% of daily calories
- 10% or less of saturated fat



## Nutrient Timing

### Pre-Exercise Nutrition

Remember one thing; if the young athlete has poor dietary habits most of the time, then good pre-exercise nutrition won't make up for it.

Have your child consume foods that they are familiar with.

### During-Exercise Nutrition

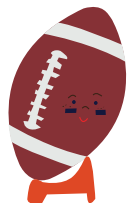
When we sweat, our body loses essential salts, known as electrolytes. Though it is important to replenish your electrolytes after physical activity, you don't have to rely on sports drinks and other electrolyte-fortified drinks to replace them. These drinks are high in sugar and calories, and ultimately unhealthy.

Kids should drink water every 15 to 20 minutes during physical activity, and then follow up with a healthy, wholesome option to regain electrolytes, such as:

- Almonds (or calcium fortified almond milk)
- Whole-wheat crackers
- Bananas
- Apricots
- Low fat fruit yogurt

### Post-Exercise Nutrition

- Kick starts the recovery process
- Rehydrates
- Repairs muscle
- Replenishes Energy



A 16-oz. glass of low fat chocolate milk is a great option. Due to the added sugar, flavored milk also boasts the optimal carbohydrate-to-protein ratio to help muscles recover and refuel: three times more carbohydrate than protein. The optimal carbohydrate-to-protein ratio also can be accomplished with white milk and a banana, white milk and graham crackers, or white milk and cereal.