

Sports Nutrition Corner
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Pre-Game Meal Choices

It is easy to become confused about what to feed our girls before a game since there is so much information out there about diets. What has always been true, however, remains the "gold standard" for feeding healthy, athletic kids: A well-balanced diet rich in carbohydrates (more than ½ of calories). Carbohydrates are the body's preferred source of fuel for exercise and sustained energy. High protein diets may be popular, but research is not conclusive on the benefits related to kids. The best carbohydrate food sources, whether simple or complex, include whole grain breads, cereals, pasta, and starches, fruits, and vegetables, and milk or yogurt.

Hydration Guidelines

*Remember, kids should drink before a game or exercise, as well as during the sport when they are actually thirsty. Thirst is usually an indicator that a child is slightly under hydrated. Therefore, please remind them to drink before, during, and after exercise, even if they are not thirsty. **How much is enough fluid?** 8-16 oz before the game; 8 oz every 15-20 minutes during the event; and 24 oz after the game (within 1-2 hours).*

***What should they drink?** Many medical studies promote sports drinks for young athletes to replace electrolytes lost in perspiration, which can help prevent muscle cramps. In addition to the lytes, kids like the taste so may drink more, and the drinks replace carbohydrates used for energy. Your best choice tastes good, is non-carbonated, caffeine-free, and contains sodium and potassium. "Sugar-free" will replace lost fluids but will not replete glucose (sugar) used for energy.*

Sport Drink Comparison:

Gatorade: 50 kcal, 14g carb, 110mg sodium, 30mg potassium, caffeine-free

Powerade: 70 kcal, 19g carb, 55mg sodium, 30mg potassium, caffeine-free

Allsport: 60 kcal, 16g carb, 55mg sodium, 50mg potassium, caffeine-free

Propel water: 10 kcal, 2g carb, 25%RDA for B vitamins, 10%RDA Vit C and E

Sugar vs. Carbohydrate:

Since these words are used interchangeably, let's look at the difference. "Sugar" usually means simple carbohydrate or refined table sugar. The natural sugar in fruit or milk is also a simple sugar, but is usually accompanied by vitamins, minerals, protein and fiber. "Starch" or complex carbohydrate takes longer to digest so provide sustained energy. These carbs are found in vegetables, pasta, grains, and cereals. Whole grain choices are most nutrient-dense because of their vitamin, mineral, and fiber content. The body best uses a combination of simple and complex carbohydrates for energy.

Nutrient Density: Choosing foods away from Home

Getting the most bang for your buck with meals and snacks means choosing foods that contain the most nutrients by weight. Examples include whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and dairy products. Healthy snacks to pack for day-long tournaments or before an early practice might include....

Yogurt and granola
Oatmeal made with nonfat dry milk
Piece of fruit or dried fruit/Trail mix
Fresh fruit/yogurt smoothie
Honey wheat bread with peanutbutter
String cheese or cheese cubes
Cottage cheese/fruit
Oatmeal raisin cookies
Pudding pack
Granola or Fruit and grain bar

Sun chips
Honey wheat pretzels
Rice cakes
Dry cereal
Vegie sticks/dip
Whole grain bagel
Prepared microwave popcorn
Assorted nuts
Fig bars
Frozen whole fruit bar

Best Fast Food Choices

Breakfast:

Whole grain cereal (hot or cold) with berries or fresh fruit and milk
Scrambled eggs, canadian bacon
Whole grain bagels, muffins, or toast with peanutbutter
Whole grain pancakes or waffles
Fruit and yogurt parfait

Lunch/Dinner:

Single burger with ketchup, mustard, lettuce, tomato vs. mayo or sauce
Grilled chicken sandwich
Grilled or broiled fish
Vegetable pizza
Grilled chicken or Chef salad
Club sandwich on whole grain bread
Whole grain wraps with lean meat and veggies
Fruit salad/yogurt dip
Hearty soup
Chicken and cheese quesadilla
Pasta with seafood, lean meat, vegetables, marinara
Low fat milkshake or frozen yogurt
Sushi rolls or Tofu dish
Chili with beans, cheese
Chicken or bean burrito with lowfat toppings: salsa, lettuce, tomato, beans, etc.