

Overview:

- Food groups
- Specific nutrient concerns for young athletes
- Hydration
- Eating before, during, and after activity

1. FOOD GROUPS:

**Note that these are general guidelines. Energy needs change with age, duration, and length of activity. The food pattern I have provided is based on a 7 year old female of average height with 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day (1600 calories). Visit www.mypyramid.gov to determine you or your child's specific calorie requirements.

Carbohydrate/Grain Group

Carbohydrates are the main source of fuel for muscles during play and exercise.

Provides energy for activity and growth.

There is NO PLACE for a low CHO diet in youth and/or any athlete.

Children should be offered CHO rich foods at each meal and snack.

How much does my child need from the CHO/Grain group?

5 ounces/day with half from whole grains

Portion sizes: 1 ounce= 1 slice whole grain bread, ½ cup oatmeal, rice or pasta, 1 cup dry cereal.

Good CHO/Grain rich sources: Pasta, rice, cereal, breads, bagels, tortillas, low-fat muffins, crackers, pretzels, graham crackers, hamburger or hot dog buns, oatmeal, pita bread, pancakes. Try to include ½ from whole grain foods.

What is considered whole grain?

Whole-wheat flour bulgur oatmeal whole cornmeal

Brown rice buckwheat popcorn Whole wheat cereal

Muesli wild rice whole rye whole grain barley

Whole wheat tortillas whole wheat bread whole wheat pasta

Look for the words "whole" or "whole grain" as the first words on the ingredient label when choosing bread

Practical tips: Mix different cereals together (ex. Cocoa puffs with muesli), mix whole wheat pasta with regular, whole wheat tortillas, whole grain bagels, light popcorn, baked chips/crackers, flavored rice cakes, animal crackers, fig newtons, low-fat granola bars, oatmeal, wild rice, whole wheat bread.

Did you know?

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Studies have shown that breakfast eaters do better in

school, have higher energy levels throughout the day, better weight control, and better overall health.

PROTEIN

Protein is important for building muscle, proper immune function, iron needs, and hormone production

Excess protein that replaces much needed CHO can impair athletic performance.

Young athletes usually get all the protein they need when eating a well-balanced, varied diet.

How much does my child need from the Meat and Beans group (Protein)?

5 ounces/day

Portion sizes (1 oz)= ¼ cup beans, 1 egg, 1 oz. Lean meat, 1 Tablespoon peanut butter, ½ oz. Nuts (handful), ¼ cup tofu.

Good Protein rich sources: Chicken, turkey, eggs, dried beans, lunch meat, lean pork, lean beef, chicken white meat, turkey white meat, refried beans, tofu, tuna, chicken/turkey sausage, peanut butter, nuts, cottage cheese.

Tips for parents: Add lean ground meat to soups, bean/cheese burritos, pasta sauce with lean meat or tofu, keep boiled eggs on hand, deli/turkey cream cheese roll-up on tortillas, Shake'n-bake chicken or pork chops, lean beef hamburgers, BBQ chicken/turkey sausages, chicken/tofu stir fry.

**Note that milk, yogurt, cottage cheese, and cheese are good sources of protein also. Try to include protein with every meal.

How do I make healthy choices at a steakhouse?

Choose lean broiled beef 3-6 ounces such as: London broil, filet mignon, sirloin, round and flank steaks.

Choose tomato and onion salads, chopped salads with balsamic vinaigrette

Green beans, spinach or broccoli, steamed or lightly sautéed.

Grilled or baked fish or other seafood dishes.

Baked potatoes with the "fixins" on the side

FRUIT

Fruit provides valuable vitamins, minerals, and fiber that helps the body stay healthy.

How much does my child need from the Fruit Group every day?

1 ½ cups per day

Fruit ideas: (Fresh, frozen, 100% fruit juice, dried fruit)

Apple, applesauce, apricot (dried or fresh) bananas, berries (frozen or fresh), cantaloupe, cherries, fruit cocktail, mango, oranges, 100% fruit juice, dried fruits (raisins, dates, cranberries, apricots, mango, apples, etc)

Tips for parents: Encourage no more than 6 oz juice/day, and then add other options of fresh, canned, dried, or frozen fruits throughout the day. Try to pick a different colored fruit each day of the week to match the colors of the rainbow. Mix dried fruits with cereal and nuts for a healthy snack. Use pureed prunes or applesauce in place of oils for baked goods.

Did you know?

Orange juice loses 2% of its Vitamin C content every day once the container is opened.

VEGETABLES

Vegetables contain phytochemicals which are natural substances found in plants that protect your health.

How much does my child need from the Vegetable Group every day?

2 cups per day

Tips for parents: Offer fresh cut up vegetables throughout the day with hummus or ranch, include your children in the produce selection at Farmer's market or the grocery store, choose intense colored vegetables, add extra vegetables to anything you can think of: sandwiches, marinara sauce, casseroles, stir-fry, Meat loaf (yes, even meat loaf), tacos, hamburgers, etc. Wash vegetables in advance, cut up, and place in bags for easy access.

Did you know?

Frozen vegetables can be just as nutritious as fresh vegetables. Keep cut frozen vegetables in the freezer to add to meals quickly. Microwaving al dente' is the best way to retain most of the nutrients.

What if my child just won't eat vegetables?

Studies suggest it may take an average of 15 times of offering a food before your child will try it or eat it! Avoid labeling your child as disliking something.... just keep offering it.

Children are most likely to eat things they see you eating (whether it be broccoli or French fries), and less likely to eat things that you try to "make" them eat.

**It is important that parents set a good example by eating fruits and vegetables too!

Dairy

“Building Stronger Bones”

Calcium is critical for strong bones and teeth

The more calcium consumed in childhood, the stronger their bones as adults.

Primary source of calcium is milk and milk products

Some dark green vegetables contain calcium like broccoli, collards, and kale, as well as some types of tofu.

How much does my child need from the Dairy Group every day?

2 cups a day for 6-8 year olds

3 cups a day for 9-12 year olds

Portion Sizes: 1 cup milk, 1 cup yogurt, 1 ½ oz cheese (3 dice), 2 oz processed cheese.

Tips for parents: String cheese, yogurts (drinkable, squirtable, regular), cheese on sandwiches, shredded cheese on steamed veggies, plain yogurt instead of sour

cream for baked potatoes/burritos, milk on cereal, calcium fortified tofu, calcium

fortified orange juice, and make cream soups with added milk instead of water.

**Try to include foods and drinks with at least 20% of the daily value on the Nutrition Food label. This will indicate a good source of calcium.

Did you know?

Live active cultures like the ones found in yogurt, can help boost your immunity.

Oils and Discretionary Calories

“Not too much and not too little”

This group includes extra fats and sugars

Some fat in the diet is necessary for good health and is also used as a source of energy during exercise and recovery.

Restricted fat diets are NOT indicated for young children.

The importance of “Healthy fats” should be emphasized.

How much does my child need per day?

Aim for 5 tsp/day of oil

Limit extra fat/sweets to 130 calories

Healthy fats = Canola oil, olive oil, nuts, seeds, peanut butter, avocado, olives, trans-free margarine, and fatty fish like salmon.

Unhealthy fats = High fat dairy products and fatty meats, tropical oils (coconut oil, palm or palm kernel oil), and Trans fats. These oils are usually found in commercially-prepared foods and anything with

“partially hydrogenated” listed on the ingredient label (usually found in commercially-prepared foods like crackers, cookies, cakes, some snacks).

The influence of Nutrition is critical for ALL stages of growth and development both physically and mentally.

Specific Nutrient Concerns for Young Athletes

Typically active children come closer to meeting their vitamin and mineral needs than their non-athletic counterparts. However, the exception to this may be Iron, Calcium, and zinc.

Food sources of Iron = fortified cereals, lean meats and poultry, dark green vegetables, and beans.

Food sources of Calcium = low-fat/non-fat milk, yogurt, cheese, fortified soy milk, and dark green leafy vegetables.

Food sources of Zinc = meat, eggs, wheat germ, shellfish, oysters.

Did you know?

Vitamin C rich foods can increase the absorption of iron.

(Broccoli, oranges, kiwi, strawberries, red/green peppers, papaya, guava, juices, etc)

Hydration

"Heat injury, usually complicated by dehydration, is the number two most common sports injury among kids, but is the most preventable"

Hydration guidelines for kids:

4-8 ounces of fluid prior to activity

4 ounces of fluids every 15 minutes during activity

After activity, consume at least 16 ounces for every pound of body weight that is lost.

Make sure your child arrives to their activity or practice WELL hydrated!

How can I encourage my child to drink?

Offer cold beverages (water, diluted juices, sports drinks, flavored waters)

Sports drinks with exercise

Drinking at all drinking fountains

Encourage and have fluids available before/during/after activity.

Eating before/during/and after activity

"Active children need to eat often to fuel their smaller bodies for physical activity—a small meal or snack every 3-4 hours is a good rule of thumb"

Pre-activity snack - Should be high in carbohydrates and lower in protein, fat and fiber so it is easily

digestible and well tolerated.

Suggestions = granola bars, cereal snack mix, bowl of cereal, bagel, banana, graham crackers, raisins, animal crackers, fig newtons, pretzels.

**If the snack is given more time to digest before activity, different snack foods can be used. I.e. yogurt, peanut butter on bagel or peanut butter sandwich, cheese and crackers, lean meat on pita bread, oatmeal cookie with milk, trail mix etc. This is something that will need to be tested with trial and error.

During-activity snack - Should be high in carbohydrates, low in protein, fat and fiber.

Suggestions= Sports drink, bagel, baked crackers, pretzels, granola bar, fig Newton, fruit (if tolerated), fruit leather, juice, dry cereal, ½ high carbohydrate sports bar, etc.

After-activity snack - Should be moderate in protein in addition to carbohydrates to help maximize glycogen stores and repair muscle damage.

Suggestions = Yogurt and banana, turkey and cheese sandwich, spaghetti with lean meat sauce, chocolate milk!

Be a Good Role Model for your child by cultivating your own good eating habits. Eat breakfast, eat your vegetables, and watch your portion sizes!.