

Step Right Up to Healthy Eating

Fuelling the Young Athlete

Taking part in recreational or competitive sports at a young age helps develop skills, confidence, good health, and fitness. The child and teen years are also important times for growth and development. So how do young athletes get enough fuel and nutrients for their sport and growth needs?



A healthy meal plan for a young athlete should include:

- Enough food energy (i.e. Calories) for exercise and growth
- Lots of carbohydrate choices, such as grains, legumes, fruits, vegetables, milk and yogurt. Carbohydrate is the main fuel source for all sports
- Enough protein for growth and to build and repair body tissues. Protein comes from: meat, fish, poultry, eggs, milk products, legumes, nuts, nut butters and seeds
- Moderate to low-fat choices so Calories are available from carbohydrates and lean proteins
- Enough fluid for the body's needs and to prevent overheating
- Variety to provide all vitamins and minerals
- Frequent meals and snacks to make sure they get enough energy

Tips for getting enough energy

Active children may need 500 to 1500 more Calories each day than their inactive peers. To get enough energy, kids may need to:

- ✓ Eat often with three nutrient rich balanced meals plus three or four healthy snacks each day
- ✓ Pack portable nutritious snacks and fluids into the training bag every day

Tips for making healthy choices:

Quality food choices are just as important as quantity! To help kids make healthy food choices:

- ✓ Encourage them to eat nutrient rich foods from all 4 groups
- ✓ Involve them in menu planning, food selection, and preparation
- ✓ Try the following healthy and tasty menus on the back page