

# Young Athletes

## What Are the Nutritional Needs of Young Athletes?

It is vital for young athletes to eat healthy including well-balanced meals and snacks in order to get the nutrients that he or she needs to perform well in sports. The new food guide pyramid, called *MyPyramid*, can provide guidance on what kinds of foods and drinks should be included in children's well-balanced meals and snacks.

Kids who are involved in strenuous endurance sports like cross-country running or competitive swimming, which involve 1 1/2 to 2 hours of activity at a time, may need to consume more food to keep up with their increased energy demands. Most athletic young people will naturally crave the amount of food their bodies need, but if concerns arise, you may want to check in with your child's doctor.

Since different foods have different combinations of nutrients, it's important that children's meals and snacks are varied as much as possible. Important nutrients include:

- **Vitamins and minerals:** a variety of vitamins and minerals are essential. Brightly colored foods such as spinach, carrots, squash, and peppers tend to be packed with them. It's especially important that children get plenty of calcium and iron. Calcium helps to build healthy bones, which are especially important if a child breaks a bone or gets a stress fracture. Calcium-rich foods include dairy products like milk, yogurt, and cheese. Iron helps carry oxygen to all the different body parts that need it and iron-rich foods include red meat, chicken, tuna, salmon, eggs, and whole grains.
- **Protein:** Protein helps build muscles, along with regular training and exercise. Protein-rich foods include fish, lean red meat and poultry, dairy products, nuts, soy products, and peanut butter.
- **Carbohydrates:** Carbohydrates provide energy for the body and are an important source of fuel. When you're choosing carbohydrates, look for whole-grain foods that are less processed and high in fiber, like pasta, brown rice, whole-grain bread, and cereal.

## Drink Up!

It's important for young athletes to drink plenty of fluid to avoid any heat illness and dehydration, which can diminish a child's strength, energy, and coordination as well as lead to other

## Exercise and activity- Get Moving

Physical activity is an important part of good health and lack of exercise is a major contributor to obesity in kids and adults. Most health organizations recommend that all kids and teens be physically active at least 60 minutes every day. Exercise is good for your muscle and bone development and it will help you maintain a healthy heart.



## FOOD GUIDE PYRAMID

### **Bread Group: 9-11**

- Bread – 1 slice
- Rice or pasta – 1/2 cup
- Cold cereal – 1 oz.
- Cooked cereal – 1/2 cup

### **Vegetables : 4-5**

- Raw – 1/2 cup
- Cooked, canned or frozen 1/2 cup
- Raw leafy – 1 cup

### **Fruits: 3-4**

- Juice – 3/4 cup
- Dried fruit – 1/4 cup
- Canned or frozen – 1/2 cup
- 1 medium fruit

### **Milk Group: 2-3**

- Milk – 1 cup
- Yogurt – 1 cup
- Slice of Cheese

### **Meat Group: 2-3**

- Egg – 1 each
- Meat – 2 to 3 oz.
- Cooked dry beans – 1/2 cup
- Peanut butter – 2 Tablespoons

## Healthy tips for school aged children

- ◇ Children need a variety of different foods each day.
- ◇ Snacks are an important part of a healthy diet for active children.
- ◇ Make snacks nutritious, not just high in energy.
- ◇ Plan to share meals as a family.
- ◇ Enjoy talking and sharing the day's happenings at meal-times.
- ◇ Let children decide when they are full
- ◇ Take lunch from home.
- ◇ Let children help with food preparation and meal planning.
- ◇ Encourage physical activities for the whole family.
- ◇ Encourage children to drink water.

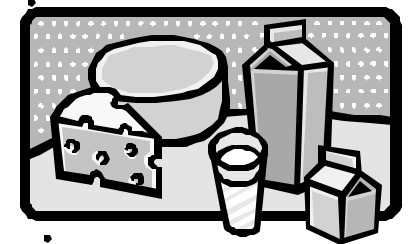
## Where to get additional help:

*Sources: Webmd.com, Kidshealth.org, The American Council on Science and Health, Betterhealth.gov, Children's hospital Boston, FDA, US Department of Health and Human Services*



# PRACTICING HEALTHY EATING HABITS

## Eating Tips for Students



# Practicing Healthy Eating Habits

## Healthy eating is a great way to:

- Have energy all day long
- Get the vitamins and minerals your body needs
- Stay strong for sports or other activities
- Reach your maximum height
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Prevent unhealthy eating habits such as skipping meals



## What is "healthy eating?"

- ♦ Aiming for regular meals (usually 3 meals per day in the morning, afternoon, and evening) and snacks (when you are hungry or need extra energy)
- ♦ Eating foods from the different food groups (grains, fruits, vegetables, proteins, dairy proteins, and healthy fats) each day to meet your nutritional needs
- ♦ Balancing nutrient-rich foods with moderate amounts of other foods like sweets or fast foods
- ♦ Eating when hungry and stopping when full

## How are children's eating and activity habits formed?

Parents play a big role in shaping children's eating habits. When parents eat a variety of foods that are low in fat and sugar and high in fiber, children learn to like these foods as well.

If your child is in school, find out more about the school's breakfast and lunch programs and ask to have input into menu choices, or help your child pack a lunch that includes a variety

of foods. Get involved in the parent-teacher association—PTA—to support physical education and after-school sports.

## **What should children eat?**

Just like adults, children need to eat a wide variety of foods for good health. In January 2005, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) jointly released the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These new guidelines outline recommendations to promote health and reduce the risk of chronic disease through nutritious eating and physical activity.

The new guidelines encourage Americans over 2 years of age to eat a variety of nutrient-dense foods. Recommended items include fruits, vegetables, fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, and whole grains. The guidelines also recommend a diet low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars.

## Good Nutrition For Kids & Teens

All parents want their children to be healthy. As elementary school aged children go through remarkable physical changes of all kinds, their food intake becomes a critical aspect of this growth and development. Recent research shows that nourishing food not only makes a child healthier, it makes him/her emotionally more stable, and it improves school performance. It is imperative that parents pay attention to their children's diets and be clever about insinuating nutritious foods into the family's daily menus.

Children should be involved in food shopping and preparing meals. These activities offer opportunities to teach children about nutrition and provide kids with a feeling of accomplishment. In addition, children may be more willing to eat or try foods that they help prepare.

## Breakfast

It is important to encourage breakfast daily. A good night's sleep followed by food in the morning helps your child to stay active and concentrate at school. It also means children will be less likely to be too hungry during the morning.

## School lunches

While many schools have a cafeteria, without some help the food children choose may be high in cost and energy but low in nutrients. An alternative is a packed lunch from home, which is a great



way for children to learn about healthy food and help with preparation. Highly processed, sugary, fatty and salty foods should only make up a very small part of your child's diet. Lunch box suggestions include:

- Sandwiches or pita bread with cheese, lean meat, hummus or peanut butter and salad
- Cheese slices, crackers with spread and fresh fruit
- Washed and cut up raw vegetables or fresh fruits
- Frozen water bottle or tetra pack of milk, particularly in hot weather.

## Dinner

The traditional breakfast, lunch, and dinner seems the best way to ensure a balanced diet, but the fact is that we may not need three meals a day. A better solution for some families may be more frequent, lighter meals. Eat meals together as a family as often as possible and try to make mealtimes pleasant with conversation and sharing.

Children of this age may have swings in appetite depending on activity levels, so allow them to choose how much they need to eat while offering a wide variety of healthy foods. Some children only eat small amounts at the evening meal, so make sure that the afternoon snack is nutritious, not just high in energy.

Family mealtime suggestions include:

- Allow children to help with preparing meals and shopping.
- Make food look attractive and interesting.
- Let children serve themselves. In this way they can decide how much to put on their plates and can always take a second helping if they want it.
- Children should be expected to taste every dish that's been prepared. If they don't like it, they don't have to eat any more but it's an excellent way to expand their food horizons.
- Let children decide when they are full - don't argue about food.

