

Fueling the Young Athlete

Whether it's ringette, soccer, baseball or track and field, fueling an athlete appropriately needs to begin at an early age. The big difference between the older athlete and the youngster is that the older athlete can usually consume larger amounts of food that translates into longer periods of satisfied energy. The young athlete is unlikely to be able to eat enough food to sustain them for a long period of time, so smart snacking is even more important in their ability to sustain activity.

Here are some fueling tips:

- Frequent (5+) small meals throughout the day consisting of 3 or more food groups each, will help to keep energy levels higher from one meal to the next – *see the chart below for choices in each food group
- Sugary snacks – even fruit or juice by itself – will contribute to highs and lows in your athlete's energy which is counterproductive
- Fluids throughout the day are important in maintaining hydration - include water, milk, fruit juice and during exercise – diluted sport drinks for optimal hydration
- Light snacks before and after exercise will help your young athlete to both perform without undue fatigue as well as recover fully from their exercise session.
 - Small snack consisting of 2-3 food groups 2 hrs before 'practice or game' time (ie. cereal, milk and fruit *or* peanut butter and banana sandwich *or* cheese and crackers with fruit *or* a smoothie with fruit, milk, yogurt, a dollop of almond butter and a handful of oats)
 - Small snack consisting of at least 2 food groups within 30 minutes of the practice or game to ensure full recovery from the session followed by a meal of 3-4 food groups within 2hrs. Snack using chocolate milk and piece of fruit *or* cereal and milk *or* fig newtons and milk *or* peanut butter and banana sandwich.
- Avoid snacks that are high in fat and sugar and low in nutrients (see Other foods in chart below) before and immediately after an exercise session. These foods do nothing more than *temporarily* satisfy hunger or an appetite and although they may be chosen, make them *infrequent* and not part of the daily food intake.

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Grains	Vegetables/Fruit	Dairy	Meat/Alternatives	Other foods
Cereal	Salads	Milk	Beef, Poultry,	Chocolate
Bread	Raw/cooked	Soy drink	Fish	Chips
Pasta	vegetables	Chocolate milk	Beans	Pop
Homemade	All fresh fruit	Cheese	Nuts/seeds	Candy
muffins	100% fruit juice	Yogurt	Eggs	French Fries

Make wise choices and ensure you are prepared and ready for action when you need to be. Your team is counting on you!