

Sport Nutrition for Parents



Sport participation poses a double challenge to feeding your kids well:

1. They require more food and more nutritious food than a less-active child.
2. They are rarely at home for mealtimes.

The rule of thumb is to make nutritious food handy for your busy young athlete.

Some successful ideas developed by parents of young athletes include:

- Invest in sturdy and appropriate equipment that enables portability of a wide variety of food. This includes knapsacks, mini-coolers, thermos flasks, freezer-packs, plastic food and beverage containers, small can openers, etc.
- Pack enough food for your athlete's day ahead. This often includes morning snacks, lunch, after-school snacks, and after-sport fluids.
- Deconstruct the meal your child is missing and be creative about ways to get some of that food into them. Some examples are:
 - Breakfast on the way to morning practices can be a tube of fruit yogurt and a bag of breakfast cereal eaten by hand. This is not likely to cause any stomach upsets during practice. What doesn't get eaten is useful for energy recovery after practice.
 - Prepare your regular supper and let your athlete eat half before an evening practice/game and half after it. The kinds of foods that are well tolerated before practice are potatoes, pasta, rice, bread, raw vegetables and dip, salad, and milk.
 - Rely on one-pot meals that can be eaten by anyone in the family at any time. Examples include pasta salads or hot pasta/meat/vegetable mixes that can be easily warmed-up in the microwave; 'make your own' sub sandwich or wraps; chilis, stews, and other slow-cooker meals. Always have cut-up vegetables in the fridge and a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter.
- Meal items can be replaced by 'en route' snacks such as: nuts, popcorn, fruit yogurt, dried fruit and fruit bars, cheese strings or cubes, plain or chocolate milk, fruit and vegetable juices, bagels, low-fat crackers, bread sticks and pretzels, baby carrots, bags of breakfast cereal, etc. For the more adventuresome, your athlete can snack on a cold baked or boiled potato; a container of drained canned nibble corn; or drained canned fruit in a zip-lock bag.
- Carry a case each of fruit bars and juice boxes in the car. Make sure you rotate your supply to avoid spoilage.
- Assemble a week's (or more) worth of fruit smoothie ingredients in single-serving re-usable plastic containers and store in the freezer. Your young athlete can retrieve a pack any time and easily prepare by tossing the mix in a blender or food processor. Example of ingredients for 1 serving: 1 cup plain or fruit yogurt; ½ banana; 20 fresh or frozen blueberries; 10 fresh or frozen strawberries; ½ cup orange juice; ¼ cup wheat germ. Be creative!
- Make your own sport drink ahead of time and freeze extra in 1 or 2 litre water bottles so they can be grabbed quickly on the way to games and practices:

500 mL	juice or fruit beverage of choice
500 mL	water
¼ tsp	salt

Being active in recreational and competitive sports helps children and teens develop lifelong healthy habits. Good nutrition not only supports physical activity, but it also enhances health and sport performances. Contact the Coaching Association of Canada for more information about how to find a [sport dietitian/nutritionist](#) to work with young and "older" athlete(s).

