**A Healthy Diet for Young Athletes**

**Hydration:** The most important thing you can do is to make sure your athlete is drinking enough fluids. Start each day with a large glass of water and have a glass of water before each meal.

* DO NOT let your athlete drink sodas or caffeinated beverages of any kind, as they work again hydration, before practice / tournament or during practice / tournament. Sports drinks are usually NOT necessary, if your athlete is hydrating throughout the day.

**Carbohydrates:** This is what fuels your athlete’s body, and unlike many adults, your athlete has NO muscle or fat reserves to pull from to fuel their bodies to participate in physical activity. Therefore, it is essential that they have a diet full of healthy carbohydrates.

* Think Fruits, potatoes, whole grain bread, oatmeal, brown rice.
* There is no need to “Carb-Load” your athlete but be sure to include healthy carbs for them at every meal.

**Protein:** Your athlete does not need a protein drink or extra protein added to their diet, unless this is something your doctor recommends. Too much protein is NOT good, but your athlete needs protein to help build and strengthen muscles.

* Lean meats, beans, milk, cheese, yogurt, and nut butter are all great protein sources to include in your athlete’s diet daily.

**Calcium:** Your athlete needs calcium to help grow and protect strong bones.

* Leafy greens, dairy products, fortified orange juice, are all great sources.

**NO POP – BEFORE OR AFTER PRACTICE – BEFORE/AFTER OR DURING TOURNAMENTS!!!**

**Affects of Pop:** Soda and other carbonated drinks are not good fluids to hydrate oneself for athletic practice or competition. Sodas that contain caffeine, which is a diuretic, cause your body to lose water, increasing the chance of becoming dehydrate.

* The amount of sugar is usually about 150 calories per can, or 10 teaspoons, and drinking soda daily could add up to 15 lbs to your weight in one year.
* Soda also contains high levels of phosphoric acid. High intake can decrease bone mineral density because phosphorus decreases levels of calcium and vitamin D in the blood.

**What to Eat BEFORE Exercise / Sports**

**When to eat before working out:** Try to eat a good meal at least 3 hours before being active. This give the body time to digest food, so that it can act as that fuel your athlete needs.

(we all wish we could have our athletes eat a good meal at least 3 hours before being active, but that’s not always the case. I have times broken down below and what to eat to help organize and try our best!)

**30 Minutes to an Hour before Workout:** Consume light meals and foods which contain simple carbohydrates and small amount of protein.

**2-3 Hours before Workout:** Consume a meal around 400-500 calories containing a good source of protein and complex carbohydrates – think brown rice, whole wheat bread, sweet potatoes.

**What to Eat AFTER Exercise / Sports**

**When to eat after exercise:** 30 minutes after and 2 hours after activity are both crucial times for you athlete to eat after strenuous exercise.

* 30 minutes after focus on carbs. Example: Chocolate milk and a bagel are the perfect post workout snack. Both provide easy to digest carbs and just enough protein and sugar to replenish the body.
  + [muffin, granola bar, Trail Mix Snack Bars or yogurt parfait]
* Post Meal 2 hours after should be well balanced with carbs, protein, and healthy fats.

\*\*\* Please remember, that no matter what you feed your athlete, remember to encourage them. Tell them you are proud of them. Don’t push them to be something they don’t want to be or can’t be. Give them a pat on the back and be their BIGGEST fan!\*\*\*

**Examples of Food Below:**



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