



A Coach's Quick Guide to Nutrition



Did you know?

POOR NUTRITION before and/or after exercise can lead to:

- ▶ Muscle weakness
- ▶ Poor concentration
- ▶ Reduced speed
- ▶ Earlier fatigue
- ▶ Dehydration
- ▶ Less endurance
- ▶ Prolonged muscle soreness

Did you know?

PROPER NUTRITION before, during and after exercise can:

- ▶ Increase energy
- ▶ Improve performance
- ▶ Promote recovery
- ▶ Support immune function
- ▶ Maintain hydration
- ▶ Promote muscle repair
- ▶ Increase concentration



This handout provides coaches with some basic information about how to use nutrition to support child and youth athletes in their health and performance.

Here are the facts on what and when athletes should eat!



Eating Before Exercise

Eating before exercise fuels and hydrates the body, sustains performance, avoids gut upset, and avoids hunger pangs during exercise.

► **What to eat before exercise:**

A meal that is higher in carbohydrates to provide energy, and slightly lower in fibre to prevent gut upset. Avoid high fat meals and excess protein. Refrain from trying new foods to prevent gut upset.

► **When to eat before exercise:**

Athletes can eat a meal 2 to 4 hours before exercise. Adding a small snack 1 to 2 hours before exercise is also acceptable. Sip on water leading up to exercise to prevent dehydration. The best fluid to drink prior to exercise is water.

Suggested Foods



Fruit smoothie



Small bowl of cereal with fruit and yogurt (2% milk fat or less)



Small bowl of pasta with tomato sauce



Whole fruits and vegetables

Eating During Exercise

For most athletes, extra fuel during exercise is not usually needed. For training sessions that are very high intensity and longer than 60 to 90 minutes, however, extra carbohydrates may be needed to sustain performance.

- ▶ **60 – 90 minutes:** generally do not need additional carbohydrate sources unless very high intensity
- ▶ **90 minutes – 4 hours:** generally requires additional carbohydrate and electrolyte sources depending on the intensity level and perspiration rate
- ▶ **4 hours +:** usually requires multiple rest/break stops with carbohydrate and electrolyte replenishment. After such prolonged exercise, athletes may have a reduced appetite, but it is important to refuel.

Suggested Snacks



Suggested snacks are similar to food choices before exercise, however, portions would typically be smaller.

Eating After Exercise

The goal of recovery nutrition is to appropriately refuel (replenish glycogen stores) and rehydrate the body, promote muscle repair and growth, boost adaptation from training sessions and support immune function.

► **What to eat after exercise:**

Post exercise nutrition should be rich in carbohydrates to replenish energy stores, contain lean protein to promote muscle repair and growth, and include fluid and electrolytes to rehydrate effectively. Most athletes are able to meet their recovery nutrition goals from regular whole foods in meals and snacks.

► **When to eat after exercise:**

For optimal recovery, athletes should eat within the first 60 to 90 minutes after exercise.

Suggested Meals



Lean chicken with salad and multigrain roll



Bowl of low-sugar granola with greek yogurt and fruit



Whole grain spaghetti with lean beef bolognese sauce and salad



Small can of tuna on whole grain crackers with a banana

What & When to Drink

Water is the best drink to meet hydration needs before, during and after exercise.

Fluid needs during exercise are unique to each person, and depend on how much the athlete sweats. This is based on many different factors such as exercise intensity, genetics, fitness level, duration of exercise, and more. Generally, the best approach is to drink water regularly throughout the exercise.

► ***What about Sports Drinks?***

It is important to know that sports drinks are usually not necessary unless you exercise longer than 60-90 minutes with very high intensity. Sports drinks may cause gastrointestinal discomfort and may negatively impact dental health.

Suggested Hydration... is WATER!



For prolonged high-intensity exercise, a healthy alternative to sports drinks is to drink water and have a portion of fruit to replenish electrolytes and energy.

MYTH or FACT?

As a coach, are you aware of the myths and facts about body weight?



63% of school children experience weight-based bullying. In Northwestern Ontario, weight-based bullying is the most frequently-reported cause of bullying. Often this is the result of negative stereotypes about people in larger bodies and inaccurate information about how food, exercise and weight are related.

Myth

You can tell how healthy someone is based on their weight.

Fact

While there are associations between health and weight, there are athletes of all weights and sizes that are healthy. Focus on sports performance - not weight - as a reason for improving nutrition.

Myth

You can determine someone's characteristics, behaviours and abilities based on their body size, weight, and shape.

Fact

People come in different shapes and sizes. Weight, body size, and shape are not directly associated with an athlete's willpower, work ethic, intelligence or skills.

Myth

Weight can be controlled by simply eating healthier and exercising more.

Fact

There are many complex factors that affect someone's weight. For example, genetics, health conditions, and the environments they live in all play a role. Athletes can have a higher than average weight but be eating well, exercising and healthy.

City-run canteens will soon offer healthier snack options. If you have healthy canteen snack suggestions you would like to see please contact Vincent Ng, Public Health Nutritionist at vincent.ng@tbdhu.com