

_ Sport Nutrition for Parents of Young Athletes

June 2005

By: Dallas Parsons, RD/Sport Dietitian

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

1. They require more food, and arguably more nutritious food than the average child.
2. They are rarely at home for meals.

1. Here are some tips on how to help your child eat adequate foods and the most nutritious food:

- ❖ Instill good eating habits at a young age by being a good role model for your child.
- ❖ Be organized and shop regularly so there are always healthy foods available.
- ❖ If your child is too tired to eat, don't panic. Encourage small, frequent snacks and fluids such as 1% chocolate milk and 100% fruit juice instead of water.
- ❖ Offer chicken, lean red meat or fish at both lunch and dinner for dietary iron - chili, tacos, fajitas, casseroles, tomato meat sauce, BBQ fish or chicken and tuna salad are just a few ideas.
- ❖ Ensure your child consumes 3-4 servings of low fat dairy or fortified soy products (1 serving = 1 cup milk or ¾ cup yogurt)
- ❖ Provide adequate carbohydrate foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, breads and cereals. Aim for 3 out of the 4 food groups at breakfast, lunch and dinner.

***Encourage healthy eating for performance, not body image. Help your child develop a healthy attitude towards food. Be sensitive to your child's feelings and listen to them.*

2. Here are some good ideas developed by parents of athletes who are rarely home for meals:

- ❖ 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, utensils, etc.
- ❖ Pack enough food for morning snacks, lunch, and after-school snacks.
- ❖ Deconstruct the meal your child is missing and be creative about ways to get the missing food into them. Some examples are:
 - Breakfast on the way to morning practices can be a tub of fruit yogurt and a baggie 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/competition and half after it. The kinds of foods that are well tolerated before practice are potatoes, pasta, bread, raw vegetables and dip, salad, and milk.

_ Sport Nutrition for Parents of Young Athletes

- Rely on one-pot meals that can be eaten by anyone 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 wrap; chili and stews, etc. Always have cut-up vegetables in the fridge and fruit on the counter.
- ❖ Useful snack replacements for meal items include: granola bars, NutriGy™ bars, nuts, popcorn, fruit yogurt, dried fruit and fruit bars, cheese strings or slices, chocolate milk, fruit and vegetable juices, bagels, low-fat crackers, bread sticks, baby carrots, bags of breakfast cereal, etc. For the more adventuresome, your athlete can snack on a cold baked potato or drained canned fruit in a zip-lock bag.
- ❖ Always have a case each of fruit bars and juice boxes in the car.
- ❖ Make your own sport drink:

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