
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Nutrition tips for your student athlete



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant, .

The easiest meal for student athletes is often the one they can grab on the go, and that often means fast food. But too much junk food — even for very active kids — is unhealthy. Combine the time crunch of getting from sport to school to home with celebratory treats that are part of the team experience, and the benefits of all of that activity diminish quickly.

According to the *New York Times Well* blog (<http://nyti.ms/S2K7XA>), part of the problem is that athletes and their parents tend to overestimate the number of calories active children need.

“Studies show that more than one in four youth sport participants are overweight and half of youths who are obese say they participate in a sport.” According to Dr. Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition and public health at New York University, the problem is greatest for the youngest students. “They’re not yet exercising as much, and they’re not growing as much,” she said.

The quality of the food is also a concern. Fast food does not provide the necessary nutrition. According to the blog, active teenage girls should eat at least one and a half cups of fruit and two and a half cups of vegetables each day as part of a recommended calorie budget of about 2,400 per day.

Active teen boys should eat two cups of fruit and three cups of vegetables daily within a total daily calorie count of about 3,000. Younger children require few calories.

Fitting in meals between games and practices is not easy. Planning ahead is key to better nutrition for active children.

The following nutrition tips for young athletes are from SportsNutritionAuthority.com (<http://bit.ly/UO7EaJ>):

- A balanced healthy diet should include a variety of lean proteins, fruits and vegetables and dairy.
- Students should not take supplements or steroids.
- Students should never participate in an extreme diet. A lack of proper nutrients could result in decreased energy, muscle loss and possibly other health problems.
- Hydrate before and during practices and games. Drink water, not caffeine and sugary drinks.
- Plan a meal approximately two to four hours before practice or game activity. Make sure the meal is not too large.
- Light snacks before a game should include fruit, crackers or yogurt.
- Additional recommendations are based on individual needs: “Because body sizes and activity levels vary from person-to-person, you need to alter your diet to fit your individual needs. For more information, visit <http://www.mypyramid.gov/> and create a personalized plan that works best for you.”