

PRODUCE PRESS

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SPOTLIGHT: YOUTH SPORTS SNACKS & HYDRATION



If you have attended a youth sports event lately, you are probably aware that the after-game snacks are a big deal. Often, children leave the event with an entire “snack bag” of treats and goodies. After a recent game with my own child, I did some quick math to evaluate the nutrition of his snack bag. The bag included 4 different packaged items and a sweetened beverage. It was around 500 calories and 50 grams of added sugar (that’s ¼ cup of sugar)! The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that kids 2 and older should not have more than 24 grams of sugar per day (about 6 teaspoons). Aside from the nutrition concerns, it’s also important to consider the message that is being sent to our young athletes about how to fuel your body for exercise and movement. After playing a game for an hour or two, they may be hungry immediately afterward or they may not. Providing kids with highly sweetened beverages and snacks may cause them to override listening to their own body and they may fill up on these type foods and eat less of the more nutritious foods at the next mealtime, which is not a habit we want young kids to start.

IN THE KITCHEN



HOMEMADE ELECTROLYTE DRINKS

It’s important that kids learn to enjoy plain water for thirst, but for intense exercise, special occasions, or a particularly hot day, a homemade electrolyte drink might be a better alternative than a store-bought sports drink. You can make your own electrolyte drink with simple ingredients you may already have on hand.

Here is a basic formula for about 24 oz of beverage:

Ingredients:

2 cups of water or unsweetened coconut water
½ cup of fruit of choice, or 100% fruit juice
¼ cup of lemon or lime
1/8 tsp of salt
1 tsp honey

Directions:

If using fruit, blend in a blender- otherwise just mix well.

TABLE TALK

Better Ways to Fuel your Young Athlete

Electrolytes are essential minerals like sodium, calcium, and potassium that are important for many key functions for the body. Did you know when we sweat, we lose small amounts of electrolytes? Fruits and veggies are a great source of vitamins, minerals, and electrolytes!

Before the game: Protein helps support muscle repair, so 2-3 hours before the game, make sure your child has a well-balanced meal which includes a good source of protein from foods like eggs, lean meat, fish, tofu, milk, or Greek yogurt. The meal should also include a good source of carbohydrate. Carbohydrates are needed to support energy levels. Examples include starchy vegetables like potatoes, corn, beans, and peas, pasta, rice, bread, tortillas, and fruit.

Before and after the game: keep your child hydrated. Make sure your child drinks plenty of water before, during, and after their sports event.

Smart Snacks: 1 hour before the game, they may need a little extra boost of nutrients to support their energy during the game. Fruit provides a fast source of energy, perfect to support energy levels before a game. Some fruits like oranges, watermelon, and grapes also have a high amount of water and can help keep them hydrated.

Bottom line: focus on providing your child whole foods with less added sugar. Keep your child hydrated with water, and keep their electrolytes replenished with fruit and vegetables.



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