

## A guide for young athletes to play their best

Your sports are important to you. To stay at the top of your game you need to practice, support your teammates, and eat well. It's true! A well-balanced diet is important for young athletes like you. It supports growing bodies, keeps you healthy, and gives you fuel to perform your best. As a young athlete, be sure to get the right amount, and the right kinds, of food.

Playing sports sometimes makes it hard to eat the right foods. Players in a rush may grab a fast food burger and fries on the way to or from practice. You may be offered "treats" after a game, and the concession stands are often filled with candy, chips and hotdogs. Those kinds of food and drinks are not the right fuel. The flood of food advice and advertising can also be confusing. Kids and parents need help finding a way to eat and perform their best. Here's how to do it!

### How much energy (calories) do I need?

Kids who play sports are more physically active than those who do not, but surprisingly they are just as likely to be overweight. Just being in sports is not enough to keep kids healthy – you have to balance how much you eat with how much activity you get. In fact, kids who play sports tend to eat more fast food and drink more sugar-sweetened beverages (like soda pop and sports drinks). These foods have more calories and sugar than many healthier choices. The USDA Dietary Guidelines recommends the following for *moderately active* adolescents:

	Female	Male
<b>9-13 years</b>	1600-2000 calories/day	1800-2200 calories/day
<b>14-18 years</b>	2000 calories/day	2400-2800 calories/day

Many young athletes do not burn as much energy during sports as you might think. Slower sports with lots of waiting time (like baseball) burn less energy than fast sports with lots of movement (like soccer). Kids who play endurance sports (running, cycling, speed skating, swimming) and practice for several hours a day need to eat more than kids who play less intense sports.

### Your goals as a player:

- Eat 3 healthy meals with snacks between meals; have a fruit or vegetable with each
- Fuel your body with healthy foods before and after events
- Eat breakfast every day
- Consume at least one more serving of dairy each day
- Eat more fruits and non-fried vegetables, choose a variety of colors
- Get more fiber; can come from fruits and vegetables, whole grains, or nuts and seeds
- Drink more water and less sport drinks, energy drinks and soda
- Plan meals and snacks ahead of time with family, especially on practice or game days
- Limit intake of fast food

Eating a lot of **fast food** you will get ...

#### Too much:

- Calories
- Unhealthy Fats (saturated fats and trans-fats)
- Sugar-sweetened beverages
- Added sugars

#### Not enough:

- Fiber
- Milk
- Fruits and vegetables

**Follow these healthy eating guidelines to perform your best!**