

Fueling Snacks to Take to Your Child's Game

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When your little league baseball player or soccer star says, "Your turn to bring snacks," stress can inadvertently be added to your already hectic day. But, it doesn't have to when your snack game plan provides nourishing, tasty choices for the hungry kids. Providing snacks that fuel up, not bog down, little athletes is a chance to teach kids the proper way to get energy for sports while, at the same time, showing them how much you care. So, instead of reaching for candy or heading to the drive-through, stop to consider the reasons for snacking and try these suggestions.

Snacks serve several purposes for active kids, like:

- Providing energy (calories) to help working muscles power through activity.
- Supplying fluids for hydration and to keep the body cool.
- Providing nutrients for growth and development.
- Promoting recovery after hard exercise.

In addition, snacks should be easily digested so blood flows to the muscles during exercise and not to the gut in order to digest a heavy, greasy snack. Depending on the time of the game, different snacks meet different needs. Here is a guide to choosing snacks based on game day and time.

After School Games

Many kids have early lunch periods during school, so they might start the game hungry. A good after school snack provides quality carbohydrates and protein for quick energy and a satisfied tummy. Consider packing your cooler with these nourishing options:

- 6-ounce cartons of a variety of fruited yogurt or yogurt in a tube.
- Peanut butter or almond butter sandwiches with natural fruit jam (cut using sports-themed cookie cutters for fun shapes).
- Turkey and/or cheese wraps cut into 1-inch slices for easy finger food.
- Low-fat string cheese and mini pretzels.
- Bottles of cold water or pitchers of cold water with lemon (cold water helps lower body temperature).

Weekend Morning Games

Muscle fuel can be very low after an overnight fast. Therefore, if you are rushing out the door to make it to a morning game, consider serving breakfast foods that kids love:

- A mini cinnamon-raisin bagel with flavored cream cheese.
- English muffin sandwich with a slice of lean ham and/or reduced-fat cheese.
- Vanilla Greek yogurt with a variety of toppings (homemade granola, chopped almonds or walnuts, or dried fruit).
- Yogurt smoothies in a variety of flavors.
- Cartons of low-fat milk with baggies full of cereal.
- 100-percent fruit juice boxes.

After the Game

After the game snacks should help to replace muscle fuel lost in exercise and replenish fluids without ruining their appetite for the next meal. Consider:

- Air-popped popcorn sprinkled with Parmesan cheese.
- Low-fat chocolate milk.
- Banana, orange slices and/or apple slices (dipped in orange juice to prevent browning).
- Fig, blueberry or strawberry bars.

Providing snacks is a part of every parent's job, so choose wisely and help your child succeed on the field, in the classroom and life.