



# GAME PLAN FOR OPTIMAL NUTRITION

## *A Guide for Parents & Coaches*

All children 2 years and older should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week to achieve optimal health. Playing soccer is a great way to meet this need.

To help kids develop and achieve overall good health, parents and coaches need to guide children to consume a balanced diet from all of the major food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat/beans) and drink plenty of water.

### CALORIC (ENERGY) NEEDS

Many children do not get enough exercise, and for children playing soccer, that may be their only physical activity that day. Most children, therefore, need not focus on consuming *extra* calories, but be attentive to eating at the right time and making *healthy* choices from a variety of food groups\*.

### HYDRATION

**Help Children Stay Hydrated** - *Encourage drinking regularly:*

- Make sure each child on the team has his or her own water bottle
- Children should avoid chips and soda because salt and caffeine promote dehydration
- Children do not respond quickly to thirst so don't wait for them to tell you they're thirsty
- Children will drink more if the drink is flavored (diluted fruit juice or diluted sports drinks) and at room temperature (not too hot or too cold)
- Aim for 7.5 cups of fluid per day for 4-8 year olds and 10 cups per day for 9-13 year olds
- **ADD 3-5 cups more per day for an exercising child....especially in hot and humid environments!**

### WHAT AND WHEN TO EAT

**Before a Practice or a Game** - *Fuel the body with energy and fluid*

- Avoid fatty or high fiber meals or snacks, as they may cause cramping
- Avoid snacks and meals high in refined and simple sugars (candy, sodas, white bread, white rice, etc) they give a quick energy boost but then actually make you feel more tired
- Eat a normal-sized meal 3-4 hours before activity or a smaller pre-exercise snack 1-2 hours prior (see reverse)
- Drink 8-10 oz of water approximately 30 minutes prior to the activity

**During Practice or a Game** - *Sustain the energy and stay hydrated*

- Drink every 15-20 minutes during prolonged exercise
- Carbohydrate-electrolyte beverages are a good choice during activities lasting longer than 60 minutes

**After Practice or a Game** - *Recover energy and fluid and repair the body*

- Drink right after the game (water, sports drinks) and throughout the day (preferably water or diluted fruit juice).
- Make sure that children have a high carbohydrate post-exercise snack (see reverse)
- Children should follow the snack an hour or two later with a healthy meal (see reverse)

\* Daily estimated caloric needs for moderately active female children are 1400 for 4-8 year olds and 1800 for 9-13 year olds. For moderately active male children, daily estimated caloric needs are 1600 for 4-8 year olds and 2000 for 9-13 year olds. Adapted from the AAP Dietary Recommendations for Children and Adolescents: A Guide for Practitioners, 2005

# HEALTHY “SOCCER DAY” FOOD CHOICES

## Breakfast

- Oatmeal with raisins
- Whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk
- Whole-grain toast/bagels with jelly, peanut butter or low-fat cream cheese
- Whole-grain waffles or pancakes (add fruit!)
- Orange Juice (4-6 oz)
- Fresh fruit
- Low-fat yogurt, granola and fruit

## Lunch

- Fresh fruit
- Baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and/or celery with hummus
- Fresh garden salad
- Low-fat sandwiches of lean meats, hummus or peanut butter with whole grain bread/rolls (add veggies like lettuce and tomato)

## Dinner

- Lean meat (turkey, chicken, pork) or fish
- Beans (black, pinto, kidney, garbanzo)
- Potatoes (try baked with veggies and plain yogurt instead of sour cream)
- Pasta (preferably whole grain with low-fat\*\* sauces)
- Rice (preferably brown)
- Vegetables (go for color!)
- Salads (without too much salad dressing!)
- Fresh fruit

## Snacks

### Pre Exercise

- Whole grain pretzels\*
- Half wheat bagel with jam
- Banana and strawberries or grapes and cherries or other fruits
- Popcorn (low salt and little or no butter)\*
- Trail Mix\*
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Whole wheat crackers\*
- Animal crackers\* and orange slices

### Post Exercise

- Bagel with low-fat cream cheese and jelly
- Low-fat yogurt with granola or fruit
- Applesauce and string cheese
- Pretzels\* and low-fat milk
- Hummus and mini pita
- Trail Mix\*
- Apple and peanut butter
- Half a peanut butter sandwich

\* A handful or two of these snacks before or following exercise will give the body energy for action!

\*\*low-fat means food sources normally lower in fat, not manufactured “low-fat” products which may be very high in sugar and calories

**Remember, be a role model and set a good example with good nutrition - children look up to you!**



Healthy Halftime Snacks™ was developed by Economos, C.E. and Sacheck, J., Tufts University, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.  
For more information go to [www.MLSsoccer.com/works](http://www.MLSsoccer.com/works)