



Teen Nutrition for Fall Sports

By Christine Rosenbloom, PhD, RDN, CSSD

Published February 13, 2014



Fall is a great season for stop-and-go sports such as soccer, football and basketball. Your teen athlete needs power for quick, strong moves, and endurance for practices and games. But how do you make sure that your active teen gets the necessary nutrients to fuel both? Here are four key tips to follow:

1. Food is fuel

You wouldn't put cheap gas in a quality car so why put unhealthy fats and added sugar in your teen athlete's body? Active teenage boys need 3000 to 4000 calories a day and active girls need 2200 to 3000 calories. Choose quality calories from fruit, vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, low-fat dairy, lean protein and heart-healthy fats. These foods provide the vitamins and minerals needed by athletes.

- For breakfast try whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk and fruit or whole grain waffles with peanut butter, banana and fruit juice.
- For lunch, review the cafeteria menus and help your teen choose performance foods instead of fried or fast food. Bean and beef burritos topped with salsa or grilled chicken sandwiches with coleslaw delivers nutrients needed for afternoon practices.
- For dinner, spaghetti with meat sauce accompanied by a salad and whole grain Italian bread with olive or canola oil spread plus low-fat milk is the perfect recovery meal.

- Keep healthy snacks handy – fresh fruit, veggies and dip, low-fat cheese and yogurt, low-fat microwave popcorn.

2. Carbs are king

Carbohydrates are the most important fuel for an athlete. Carbs are stored as fuel inside muscles and athletes need full carbohydrate stores before activity. Carbs are also needed after a workout to get ready for the next day's events. Carbs are the only fuel that can be used for power moves – a slam dunk, a sprint to the goal line, or an overhead smash all need muscle carbohydrate.

- Eat a light snack before practice (especially if your teen has an early lunch period), like half of a turkey sandwich or an orange and string cheese and drink 1 to 2 cups of water.
- After practice or a game, refuel with a sports drink or low-fat chocolate milk, a banana and handful of trail mix.

3. Build muscle with protein from foods

Eat real food and shun expensive protein supplements. Muscles can get all the protein they need from foods:

- Lean meat, chicken, turkey, fish, eggs, low-fat milk, cheese and yogurt are quality proteins.
- Include some protein in every meal to help muscles recover.

4. Pack snacks

Active teens need snacks to boost calories. Here some backpack friendly snacks:

- Sports drinks or juice boxes
- Trail mix
- Peanut butter crackers
- Granola bars
- Fig bars

Chris Rosenbloom, PhD, RD, CSSD, is the sports dietitian for Georgia State University athletics.

Tags [Fitness](#), [Food](#), [Sports and Performance](#), [Nutrition](#), [Fueling Your Workout](#), [Tips for Athletes](#), [Nutrition Facts and Food Labels](#), [For Kids](#), [For Teen](#)

© 2015 eatright.org. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, All Rights Reserved.

Welcome to eatright.org.

We're glad you're visiting our new site.

[Editorial Policy for Academy Websites](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Media](#) [Contact Us](#) [Site Map](#)