

Catering for Young Athletes

Meeting the energy requirements of young athletes is important. Well-planned eating practices support athletes to stay healthy, train hard, and stay injury free.

These years are important for growth and development, immune health, and to maintain concentration at school. Active students require a higher energy intake to meet their requirements.

Canteens can support school-aged athletes by offering healthy food and drink options before school and at designated breaks. These should include a range of carbohydrates, proteins, and healthy fats.



Protein

- Protein provides the building blocks for muscle growth and repair. It is also important for normal immune function. Lean protein sources include meat, seafood, eggs, dairy and alternatives (e.g., soymilk), legumes, nuts and seeds.

Carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates are our bodies main source of energy. They provide energy for active bodies, fibre for gut health and a wide range of essential vitamins and minerals. Choose wholegrain breads and cereals, legumes, fruit, starchy vegetables, and dairy products.

Healthy fats

- Healthy fats are necessary for normal growth and development. Include unsaturated fats in main meals and snacks. Healthy fats include nuts, avocado, olive oil, and oily fish such as salmon and tuna.

Fluids

- Fluids are essential to stay hydrated. Drinking adequate fluids before, during and after exercise supports performance and recovery. Water is the best choice. Canteens can make large water bottles available for those students who don't always have refillable bottles on hand.

For young athletes who participate in sport before or after school it is not uncommon to miss meals or choose less nutritious snacks. Below are some healthy food & drink ideas that your canteen may consider offering to fuel these students:

Before exercise

For young athletes participating in sports later in the day or after school, consider foods that are transportable and quick and easy to eat. Foods should be rich in carbohydrates and low in fat and fibre to prevent stomach discomfort.

Help students to fuel up with:

- Whole fresh fruit.
- Small bowl of pasta with tomato-based sauce.
- Frozen breakfast drink or milk and milo.
- Wrap or sandwich with tuna and salad.
- Yoghurt with fruit salad.
- Trail mix: popcorn, whole grain cereals and dried fruit.



After exercise

For young athletes who have participated in sport either before school or earlier that day, consider foods that help with recovery, repair, and energy replenishment. Offer food that contains quality carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats. Ensure fluids are offered to rehydrate.

Help young athletes to refuel with:

- Porridge with banana.
- Wholegrain toast.
- Pikelets with fruit.
- Eggs.
- Lean chicken and salad roll.
- 375mL plain or flavoured milk.
- Cup of muesli with yoghurt.
- Spaghetti with lean beef bolognaise.
- Dairy based fruit smoothie.

References Broad, Elizabeth M. and Cox, Gregory R. (2008) 'What is the optimal composition of an athlete's diet?', European Journal of Sport Science, 8:2, 57 - 65 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2013). Eat for health. Australian dietary guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au> Nutrition Australia (2012). Healthy Hydration Fact Sheet. viewed 25 June 2019, <http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/sites/default/files/Healthy%20Hydration.pdf> For more sports nutrition information see fuelto.go.com.au