

Recently, as I prepared to give a talk to high school coaches about Fueling the High School Athletes, I did a quick Google search to see what information they might be receiving if they did the same. Wow- click bait galore: “Ten Foods Athletes Should Eat” and “These Foods May Break a Young Athlete’s Success.” Having been the sports nutritionist to professional baseball, football and basketball teams, I can assure you these are just headlines. The reality is that high school athletes have done well for years eating all sorts of foods.

High school athletes range from young recreational athletes to senior, well-developed competitive athletes. Their needs are different.

As coach, take the following into consideration:

- age
- stage of physical development
- competitive level
- intensity and volume of training
- personality type (a or b)
- sports (high risk for eating disorder like gymnastics, dance, skating, diving, and perhaps track)
- athletes’ sense of self and goals
- food (in) security
- ethnic, cultural and individual norms for body and food preferences
- schedule



COME BACK STRONGER | **REFUEL** with chocolate **MILK**

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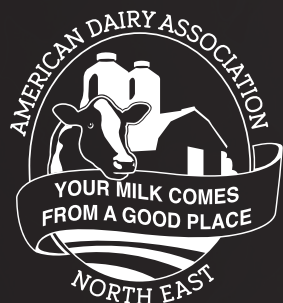
Getting Real About Sports Nutrition for High School Athletes

So, as a coach, what are you to do?

Address the fundamentals first. The groundwork for all nutrition is getting in adequate calories. Not only do high school athletes need to fuel their sports and training, they need to fuel growth which can require a lot of calories.

As basic as this may seem, it is not a given. Skipping breakfast or grabbing a ‘bar’, skipping lunch or eating just a sandwich may mean that many student athletes show up at practice having eaten 400 calories for the day. Under fueling not only affects energy, but also the risk of injury, concentration, hormones, immune system, bone health and more.

Help your athletes by suggesting they eat each meal and ‘top off their tank’ with an easy to digest snack before practice. The closer to playing, the smaller the amount and the easier to digest carbohydrate is recommended. Pre-practice snacks are for fueling, not for nourishment. Meals are for nourishment.



THIS is the priority for junior and development athletes

A small boost from a few ergogenic supplements

Final layer for elite athletes who have already achieved a sound nutrition plan

If resources allow after foundation has been achieved

Added benefits from using sports foods before, during or after an event or workout to refuel, rehydrate, repair and adapt

The Foundation:
well-planned meals and snacks chosen from a range of nutrient-rich foods to meet sports nutrition goals

Here are four things you can do or say now to encourage a developing athlete's healthy sports nutrition practices:

- 1** Have you eaten breakfast today?
- 2** Hope you all had a snack before practice.
- 3** Remember to eat soon after practice (bring a snack).
- 4** Build in water breaks to support hydration.

Encourage an after-practice snack if students will not eat dinner for several hours. This will help them replenish the energy they used in practice while taking the 'edge' off their hunger. They need not spend a lot of money on proprietary recovery products. There are many real food options.



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Pre-Practice Snack Ideas:

- Cereal Bars
- Sports Bars
- Salty Snacks (Pretzels, crackers)
- Oatmeal Cups
- Fruit Cups (in juice)
- Dry Low-Fiber Cereal
- Fruit
- Mini bagels
- Banana (with nut butter if further away from practice)
- Coconut water
- Sports drink

Post-Practice Snack Ideas:

- PB&J with a fruit
- Chocolate Milk
- Jerky with pretzels
- Homemade trail mix (cereal/pretzels, nuts, dried fruit)
- Greek yogurt with fruit and/or granola
- Smoothie
- Tuna packets with crackers or a pita pocket
- Hard boiled eggs with whole wheat toast
- Cottage cheese with pineapple
- Dried fava beans or dried garbanzo beans
- Smoothie Pouches (add carbs)
- Potato boat with chili, shredded cheese
- DIY burrito bowl with beans and rice