



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

YOUTH SPORTS NUTRITION GUIDELINES

The YMCA cares about your child and their nutrition. We are facing a national obesity epidemic – especially among children. The Y wants to “do our part” by making sure that your child’s Youth Sports experience provides both physical activity and healthy eating.

YMCA SNACK/DRINK GUIDELINES:

- Can be a food snack or a drink snack, **but not both**, UNLESS the drink is **water**
- Must be around **100 calories TOTAL** (food and/or drink = 100 calories)
- Must be healthy
- Low in sodium/fat/cholesterol
- Less than 30% of calories from fat
- No candy, chips, donuts, or high calorie snacks
- 100% juice for all “fruity” drinks and 1% or fat free milk
- No soda or non-juice drink (except no-calorie flavored water)
- No caffeine

Does our team need a snack? Many children playing sports eat more in “snack” calories than they burned playing the sport, resulting in weight gain. Use good judgment: If a snack isn’t really needed, don’t provide one because “the kids expect it”.

Team snacks should be given for young children (3 – 8) if it has been more than 2 hours since their last meal and/or it is a “normal” snack time or the practice/game occurs in the middle of or right before a normal meal time. For older children assess each situation and only give a snack if indicated.

If your team plays “hard”, discuss if they need a snack. A child playing 15 minutes out of two 30 minute halves probably isn’t playing hard or long high enough to burn off calories consumed by snacking. Consider saving time and expense if your team doesn’t really need to eat and “skip the snack”.

Can we give the kids a snack for playing well? No. We want to avoid promoting eating as a reward for physical activity and only give snacks when the children really need to eat.

What is a reasonable snack?

Snacks should be around 100 calories – which includes BOTH a drink and food item, or one or the other – but not both. Water is a great beverage to include if the snack you are providing is already around 100 calories. We recommend water over other drinks.

Can I bring a juice box AND a food snack? Yes, but only if the combination of those two items is less than 100 calories. Why not bring some bottled water instead?

Here are some smart snacking ideas – but make sure to check the nutrition label for the calories!

- Bagels (SMALL – sometimes ½ or ¼ of a bagel is considered a serving)
- Boxed drinks – 100% fruit
- Cereal (non-sugary, such as Cheerios, Cracklin' Oat Bran, etc.)
- Cheese sticks or cheese cubes
- Cherry or grape tomatoes
- Crackers
- Cut up veggies, such as carrots, with yogurt
- Dried fruit
- Fat-free jello pudding
- Sugar free gelatin
- Fresh fruit
- Fruit snack (where 1st ingredient is fruit)
- Graham crackers
- Granola bars
- Mini rice cakes
- Popcorn
- Pre-packaged fruit cups
- Pretzels
- Trail mix
- Yogurt

Some items may pose a choking hazard for younger children. Please use good judgment in snack item selection.

Don't forget to DRINK WATER and STAY HYDRATED!

Drink on a schedule – Many children won't take in enough fluids on their own. Thirst is a sign that your child is already low on fluid. Most kids playing recreational sports won't need a sports drink (i.e., Gatorade). The best way to quench thirst is to drink water. Drink at 2 hours and again at 15 minutes before sports, every 20 minutes during sports (10 sips), and after sports (within 2 hours following play, up to 25 ounces for each pound lost – if hot or play was hard).

Watch for signs of heat illness. The following are signs that your child is dehydrated:

- Dry lips and tongue
- Sunken eyes
- Bright colored or dark urine, or urine with a strong odor
- Infrequent urination and/or small volume of urine
- Apathy or lack of energy

Your kids are also watching you all the time. They mimic what you say, do and eat. Remember to be a good role model in behavior, activity, and eating! Try to plan meals so that you don't "undo" the benefits of participation in sports by eating big fast-food meals in the car on the way home!

