

Move Well Eat Well



Food and drink for active kids

To have enough energy to be active, it is important that children have a variety of 'everyday' foods and drinks from the five food groups. Consider these tips:

Tip 1: Encourage your child to eat a variety of foods

Healthy eating will give your child the energy they need for being active and enjoying sport. Encourage your child to eat a variety of 'everyday' foods from the five food groups:

- breads and cereals, rice, pasta, noodles – choose mostly wholegrain and/or high fibre varieties
- fruit
- vegetables
- lean meat, chicken, fish, eggs, nuts* and seeds and legumes (e.g. kidney beans, chickpeas)
- milk, yoghurt and cheese – reduced fat varieties where possible.

*check your school/club policy on nuts

These foods provide all of the nutrients a growing body needs to be active. If your child is very active they may need extra carbohydrate-rich energy foods such as breads and cereals, fruit, starchy vegetables (potato, sweet potato, corn, and legumes), milk and yoghurt.

Lollies and sweet drinks such as cordial and sports drink are high in sugar but have no other nutritional value. These are best eaten sometimes, not every day, as they can fill children up and replace other more nutritious foods.

Tip 2: Help your child tap into water every day

Water is the best drink to keep your child hydrated throughout the day. Children often wait until they are thirsty before they start to drink and by this time they may already be dehydrated.

To make sure your child is well hydrated and able to play at their best, encourage your child to:

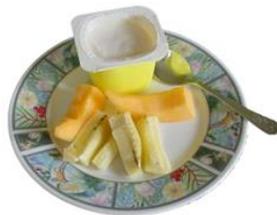
- drink before going to school or a game, preferably water or plain milk
- take a water bottle to school or a game
- drink at least 500ml – 1 litre by the end of the school day
- drink during training and at any game breaks
- drink plenty after training or competition (around two glasses)
- drink more in hot weather and when being very active.

Move Well Eat Well

Tip 3: Get snack smart

Snacks should be a 'mini-meal' and based on 'everyday' foods from the five food groups. For active children this is a great time to top up their energy stores by providing carbohydrate-rich foods. Why not try:

- salad sandwiches or toasted sandwiches
- baked beans or spaghetti on toast
- yoghurt and fruit
- cheese and whole-grain crackers
- fruit bun or fruit loaf
- fruit smoothie.



Tip 4: Encourage eating a few hours before sport

It's important to eat and drink before playing sport. Having a meal a few hours before sport will make sure it is well digested before the game starts. If your child is playing sport in the morning, make sure they have a good breakfast to get them through the game. Try the following ideas:

- breakfast cereal with milk and fruit
- yoghurt and fruit
- toast, English muffin or crumpet with spread (e.g. avocado or nut pastes)
- baked beans or spaghetti on toast

If your child is nervous, they may not feel like eating before playing sport. It's still important to encourage them to eat or drink something to make sure they have enough energy to get through a game. Try something easy to eat such as a piece of fruit or fruit smoothie.



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Frequently asked questions about food, drink and physical activity

How much should my child drink?

This varies from child to child, but most children need between 1.2 and 1.6 litres of fluid a day, which is about 5-7 (250ml) glasses. They will need more fluid if they are doing strenuous activity, particularly in warm weather. Water and plain milk are the best choices for children.



Getting your child to check their urine colour helps them understand how much they need to drink to keep hydrated. Dark urine shows that they need to drink more, and clear urine shows that they are well hydrated.

What about sports drinks?

Sports drinks are designed for athletes who do high-intensity activity for over an hour. These drinks contain broken-down carbohydrate for energy and small amounts of electrolytes (sodium and potassium) that are lost from sweating. Most junior sport is at a level where energy and electrolytes do not need to be replaced during a game. Making sure that your child has a meal before a game and drinks water before, during and after the game will help them perform at their best.

If there is more than an hour between events it is best to eat 'everyday' foods such as sandwiches, fruit and yoghurt and drink water. This gives your child the necessary energy but also important vitamins and minerals for growing bodies.

Do children need sports drinks?

Sports drinks are designed for elite athletes who do high-intensity activity for well over an hour. Most junior sport is not at this level or of this duration, so sports drinks are not needed.

To make sure your child plays at their best, make sure they:

- enjoy some 'everyday' foods before a game – fresh fruit, yoghurt, sandwich or glass of milk.
- drink water before, during and after the game.

What about sports food?

Specialised sports foods such as sports bars, gels or powders are not recommended in children under 15 years. These products have been developed for elite adult athletes to help them meet their nutrition goals. These products contain vitamins and minerals well above the recommended levels for children. Children should be able to meet all their nutrition needs for sport by eating a wide variety of 'everyday' foods.

What are the best half-time snacks for team sports?

If your child has eaten some carbohydrate-rich foods as part of a meal or snack before competition it is unlikely they will need any extra during the game.

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But sharing food can be a team building exercise and provide an opportunity to promote healthy food messages alongside active play.

Ideal choices include fruit such as:

- oranges
- banana
- watermelon



These fruits not only provide energy but are also a source of vitamins, minerals, and fibre.

Remember: wash hands, wash fruit.

What about lollies or cordial?

Lollies and sweet drinks such as cordial and sports drink are high in sugar but have no other nutritional value. These are best eaten sometimes, not every day, as they can fill children up and replace other more nutritious foods.

For more information on healthy eating and physical activity for children go to:

Move Well Eat Well website www.movewelleatwell.tas.gov.au

Sports Dietitians Australia website <http://www.sportsdietitians.com.au/>

This is a Healthy Tasmania initiative
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