

Snack Suggestions for the Student Athlete

By Jennifer Hobbs, M.S., R.D.

Our children are working very hard out on the track, training for their upcoming meets. What they eat and drink before, during and after a practice/competition is very important to their health and performance.

Before:

Ideally, your child should eat a snack 1 hour before a practice/competition that is easily digested. It might be helpful to pack a snack for the meet, especially if his/her event is later in the day, or is he/she is competing in multiple events.

Pre practice/event snack suggestions: dry cereal, granola bar, bagel, wheat crackers, trail mix with dried fruit, yogurt, fruit, pretzels.

After:

After a long practice or event, your child needs to replenish the nutrients he/she lost. Within 45 minutes your child should try to eat something with both carbohydrate and protein. The carbohydrate will help replenish what was used during exercise, and the protein will help his/her muscles recover.

Post practice/event snack suggestions: chocolate milk, yogurt, peanut butter sandwich or cheese and crackers.

Sports bars and drinks:

You don't really need to spend the money on these items when food can do the job. Sometimes these items are more convenient, but more often they are expensive as well.

Fluid:

It is so important to drink water before, during and after a practice/event. Water is best before and during a practice/event, but other fluids (such as juice, milk, sports drinks) can be consumed after a practice/event. Eating foods with high water content (oranges, melons, yogurt) can also supply additional fluid. If you are concerned about whether your child is consuming enough fluid, check the color of his/her urine (I know, yuck!) It should be pale yellow. If it is concentrated and dark—then he/she needs to drink more fluids.

No Surprises!

Try to stick to foods and beverages that your child is used to eating during an event. Sometimes new foods can upset their GI system, especially when nerves come in to play!

Recommended reading: Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook by Nancy Clark, M.S., R.D.