



# GAME PLAN FOR OPTIMAL NUTRITION

## *A Guide for Parents & Coaches*

All children 2 years and older should get at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise on most, preferably all, days of the week to achieve optimal health. Playing soccer is a great way to meet this need.

To help kids develop and achieve overall good health, parents and coaches need to guide children to consume a balanced diet from all of the major food groups (grains, vegetables, fruits, milk, meat/beans) and drink plenty of water.

### **CALORIC (ENERGY) NEEDS**

Many children do not get enough exercise, and for children playing soccer, that may be their only physical activity that day. Most children, therefore, need not focus on consuming *extra* calories, but be attentive to eating at the right time and making *healthy* choices from a variety of food groups\*.

### **HYDRATION**

**Help Children Stay Hydrated** - *Encourage drinking regularly:*

- Make sure each child on the team has his or her own water bottle
- Children should avoid chips and soda because salt and caffeine promote dehydration
- Children do not respond quickly to thirst so don't wait for them to tell you they're thirsty
- Children will drink more if the drink is flavored (diluted fruit juice or diluted sports drinks) and at room temperature (not too hot or too cold)
- Aim for 7.5 cups of fluid per day for 4-8 year olds and 10 cups per day for 9-13 year olds
- ADD 3-5 cups more per day for an exercising child....especially in hot and humid environments!**

### **WHAT AND WHEN TO EAT**

**Before a Practice or a Game** - *Fuel the body with energy and fluid*

- Avoid fatty or high fiber meals or snacks, as they may cause cramping
- Avoid snacks and meals high in refined and simple sugars (candy, sodas, white bread, white rice, etc) they give a quick energy boost but then actually make you feel more tired
- Eat a normal-sized meal 3-4 hours before activity or a smaller pre-exercise snack 1-2 hours prior (see reverse)
- Drink 8-10 oz of water approximately 30 minutes prior to the activity

**During Practice or a Game** - *Sustain the energy and stay hydrated*

- Drink every 15-20 minutes during prolonged exercise
- Carbohydrate-electrolyte beverages are a good choice during activities lasting longer than 60 minutes

**After Practice or a Game** - *Recover energy and fluid and repair the body*

- Drink right after the game (water, sports drinks) and throughout the day (preferably water or diluted fruit juice).
- Make sure that children have a high carbohydrate post-exercise snack (see reverse)
- Children should follow the snack an hour or two later with a healthy meal (see reverse)

\* Daily estimated caloric needs for moderately active female children are 1400 for 4-8 year olds and 1800 for 9-13 year olds. For moderately active male children, daily estimated caloric needs are 1600 for 4-8 year olds and 2000 for 9-13 year olds. Adapted from the AAP *Dietary Recommendations for Children and Adolescents: A Guide for Practitioners, 2005*

# HEALTHY “SOCCER DAY” FOOD CHOICES

## Breakfast

- Oatmeal with raisins
- Whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk
- Whole-grain toast/bagels with jelly, peanut butter or low-fat cream cheese
- Whole-grain waffles or pancakes (add fruit!)
- Orange Juice (4-6 oz)
- Fresh fruit
- Low-fat yogurt, granola and fruit

## Lunch

- Fresh fruit
- Baby carrots, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and/or celery with hummus
- Fresh garden salad
- Low-fat sandwiches of lean meats, hummus or peanut butter with whole grain bread/rolls (add veggies like lettuce and tomato)

## Dinner

- Lean meat (turkey, chicken, pork) or fish
- Beans (black, pinto, kidney, garbanzo)
- Potatoes (try baked with veggies and plain yogurt instead of sour cream)
- Pasta (preferably whole grain with low-fat\*\* sauces)
- Rice (preferably brown)
- Vegetables (go for color!)
- Salads (without too much salad dressing!)
- Fresh fruit

## Snacks

### Pre Exercise

- Whole grain pretzels\*
- Half wheat bagel with jam
- Banana and strawberries or grapes and cherries or other fruits
- Popcorn (low salt and little or no butter)\*
- Trail Mix\*
- Carrot and celery sticks
- Whole wheat crackers\*
- Animal crackers\* and orange slices

### Post Exercise

- Bagel with low-fat cream cheese and jelly
- Low-fat yogurt with granola or fruit
- Applesauce and string cheese
- Pretzels\* and low-fat milk
- Hummus and mini pita
- Trail Mix\*
- Apple and peanut butter
- Half a peanut butter sandwich

\* A handful or two of these snacks before or following exercise will give the body energy for action!

\*\*low-fat means food sources normally lower in fat, not manufactured “low-fat” products which may be very high in sugar and calories

**Remember, be a role model and set a good example with good nutrition - children look up to you!**

