

You Are What You Eat

A Guide To Living Right, Eating Right and Playing The Right Way

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It's true that what we eat has an impact on who we are, how we feel and our overall health, wellness and day-to-day life. It's also true that who we are, how we feel and our day-to-day life have a significant impact on what we choose to eat.

With that said, what should today's hockey player be eating? Here are some easy answers to a complicated question.

Breakfast of Champions: Get Your Day Off On The Right Skate

Breakfast Ideas

- Natural peanut butter on whole wheat toast with banana slices (no sugar added jelly optional), and a glass of 1% milk
- Whole grain frozen waffle sandwich (add natural almond or peanut butter and banana slices), and a glass of soy milk
- Whole wheat bagel with a slice of cheese (slice of tomato optional) and a glass of milk.
- Scrambled eggs with cheese, two links turkey or vegetarian sausage, 1 cantaloupe wedge and a glass of milk or water.
- Yogurt (try Stoneyfield organic or any brand Greek Yogurt), with blueberries and sunflower seeds or granola mixed in.

We're all told that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. This is especially true for young athletes. Eating the right foods, first thing, will give you energy for hockey practice, school and a fun, full and busy day.

For many people, breakfast is hard to fit in. Why?

- Not enough time
- Not hungry
- Not sure what to eat

Here are some simple tips for how to eat right, right away.

Pick one food from each of these categories:

Fruit: Berries (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries), bananas, apples, pears, oranges, grapefruit, peaches/plums, kiwi, mangoes, melons (cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon)

Protein: Yogurt, eggs, cheese, natural peanut or almond butter, turkey or vegetarian sausage or bacon

Whole grain: Whole grain frozen waffle, oatmeal or any cold cereal with at least three grams of fiber, like Kashi Heart to Heart, Raisin Bran or Annie's Bunnies (honey, cinnamon or original), whole grain English muffin or toast, whole wheat bagel

Fluid: Water, skim or 1% milk, vitamin-enriched soy milk

• **Fun tip:** Try combining foods from each group.

Make a smoothie for a cool, quick breakfast. (See breakfast ideas

Pre-game Meals: What, When And Why To Eat Before A Game Or Practice

WHAT

Pre-game meals are key for improved athletic performance both physically and mentally. Here are some easy options and ideas for how to schedule this important meal for maximum effectiveness.

Six Great Web Resources for Meal Ideas

- Allrecipes.com •
- DanaFarber.org/nutrition (recipe archive)
- Epicurious.com
- Aicr.org (recipe corner)
- Cookinglight.com
- Eatingwell.com

The pre-game meal should consist of a protein-rich food, whole grains or fruit and fluids (water). Examples include: ½ cup trail mix and a piece of fruit or yogurt (6-8 oz). Whole grain bagel or English muffin and top with tomato sauce and cheese), pasta (half whole grain) with tomato sauce (or olive oil/butter) and either cheese, frozen shrimp, chicken, 95 percent lean meat (organic when possible), beans, or Morning Star Farms frozen Meal-Starters vegetarian protein crumbles. Chopped fruit cup topped with yogurt (add granola or sunflower seeds for crunch and more nutrients).

WHEN

Eat your pre-game meal one to two hours before the game – two hours for a more hearty meal choice, one hour for more of a snack or mini-meal sized

portion. Be careful not to eat too much; aim for half of the amount you would usually eat at dinner. “Practice” your pre-game meal before a longer hockey practice so you can figure out how your body digests certain foods and feels during exercise, before you really need to know for the big game.

WHY

Research has shown that having a pre-game meal or snack with protein and whole grains helps promote:

- Clear thinking during competition, or being “on your mental game”
- Faster body reaction times
- Improved athleticism
- Better coordination

Protein and whole grains are the best choices because they are digested more slowly, allowing the energy from the food to last longer. High-sugar foods, including juice or white flour breads, burn off quickly making them poor choices for a pre-game meal. You’ll get an energy burst that will then crash when you need it most – during your game.

Between Period Nutrition

Choose small amounts of foods that are primarily easy-to-digest carbohydrates. You want quick energy here that will get into your system with little work.

- Bananas, apples, pears or orange slices
- 4-8 oz. Gatorade or other sports drink without caffeine
- Graham crackers, pretzels or animal crackers

Post-game Meals: Eating Your Way To Recovery

Choose a high carbohydrate, easy-to-digest food or fluid right after your game or intense practice. (See Between Period Nutrition ideas.) Drink 8-16 ounces of a sports drink without caffeine to help replace fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes burnt in muscle during exercise.

Within one to two hours of your game, eat a healthy, hearty meal. Be sure to include foods from all the key categories you learned about for breakfast (carbohydrates – like pasta, baked white or sweet potato, brown or wild rice, protein – like fish, white meat chicken or turkey, lean red meat, tofu, edamame, beans, fruits and vegetables; and fluids).

Foods that are less processed are best because they are naturally anti-inflammatory. After a game or practice you want to help decrease the inflammation, swelling and overall resistance in your body that naturally occurs from intense physical exertion. In general, natural foods that are minimally processed are best and are considered anti-inflammatory.

Specifically, all fruits, vegetables, nuts, nut butters, whole grains, seeds and beans (hummus, etc.) are anti-inflammatory.

Within this group, things like avocado, pineapple, papaya, pomegranate, melon (cantaloupe, watermelon), ginger, garlic, extra virgin olive oil, canola oil, walnuts, almonds, pumpkin seeds, ground flax seeds and fish (wild salmon or canned salmon instead of tuna) are the most potent anti-inflammatory foods.

Fried foods, processed meats (hot dogs, bologna), packaged snack foods (chips, etc), red meat, vegetable/soybean oil and corn oil are all pro-inflammatory or more likely to add inflammation in the body. Drinking lots of water is important to help reduce inflammation.

Fast food, eaten on a regular basis, can be very detrimental to young athletes and negatively impact hockey performance.

Meals On Wheels: What To Eat On The Road

American culture is full of quick, easy convenience foods. Unfortunately most of these lack the essential nutrients young athletes need, and provide an overabundance of calories and saturated fats causing weight gain, health problems and low energy levels.

It's important to note that it's body fat that a child or teen will gain from eating high calorie, nutrient-devoid foods, not the muscle they want.

Fast food, eaten on a regular basis, can be very detrimental to young athletes and negatively impact hockey performance. Fast food contains many ingredients, such as trans-fat and saturated fats and high fructose corn syrup, which promote inflammation in the body. This can lead to more muscle soreness, pain, slower recovery between practices or games, decreased immunity and weight gain (as body fat).

Decreased immunity makes young athletes more susceptible to colds, flu and other infections and ultimately leads to more missed practices and games.

Of course, having a fast food meal every once in a while is not a problem.

Everything in moderation is still a good way of thinking.

Planning ahead may be the best way to guarantee a healthy meal for an athlete. Putting together a cooler with healthy foods that are ready to go when you pick up your child or teen from practice or a game is very important. In the long run, it's worth the extra effort and time.

These days many parents struggle with finding time to cook, let alone pack a lunch/dinner for their kids. Once you get a system down of what to buy at the store, and what you want to pack, it gets easier and more efficient over time.

Purchasing a new cooler, cool pack lunch box or backpack may also help you organize this task.

If you are traveling for games and are away from home for an extended

period of time, look for a local grocery store to stock up on meals and snacks for your athlete.

For those times you may choose to get fast food or find it's your only option, here are some tips for making the best of it:

- Choose water or milk
- Get smaller portions
- Order grilled vs. "crispy" chicken or fish
- Look for fruits or vegetables offered on the menu
- Get salad dressing on the side and use about half of the amount provided
- Egg and cheese without meat is a healthier choice
- Bagels or English muffin vs. croissant or biscuit

Making healthy meals, on a budget that are quick and easy can be challenging. Over time including healthy food in your everyday diet gets easier and becomes a wonderful habit. You or your athlete may benefit from meeting with a registered dietitian who specializes in nutrition for young athletes to help make an individualized eating plan. Making small, healthful changes gradually is truly the recipe for success.