

THE HOCKEY MOM / By Christie Casciano Burns

Olympian Or Not, Healthy Eating Is A Gold-Medal Idea

LET'S SET THE STAGE. Your rink is hosting an 8 & Under tournament this weekend, and as you enter the doors you see kids dashing off in every direction.

Games of knee hockey break out in the corner, pucks are flipped against walls and hockey bags are strewn across the floor throughout the lobby. The line at the snack bar snakes down the hall with parents and kids preparing to make their selection of snacks and sugary drinks in their favorite color.

It looks like a few teams thought ahead and called in pizza for their break between games as they huddle around the steaming boxes. At closer inspection, the trash cans show evidence of parents who stopped at their favorite fast food spots.

Looking around there aren't a lot of displays of healthful eating. We have all been there. During those tightly packed weekends, balancing game after game, our focus is on speed and efficiency more than quality.

I always envied the hockey parents who aced balancing a hectic hockey family schedule and good eating.

Anomalies you say? Maybe not. If you have the right game plan, there are a few tricks we can adopt before we #hockeyparentfail ourselves and give in to our hangry little hockey players.

Sports dietician for the U.S. Women's National Team, Carrie Aprik, says the goal for children and teens is to develop healthy, lifelong nutrition habits, create a positive

relationship with their bodies and develop a healthy mindset toward their eating habits.

"Help them focus on what their bodies can DO vs. what they look like," Aprik says. "Use positive, inclusionary messaging around food (as in, 'make sure to eat X as opposed to you can't eat Y'). Parents should also stay on the lookout for their kids falling into the lure of nutrition misinformation and negative body image culture, which lurks on social media."

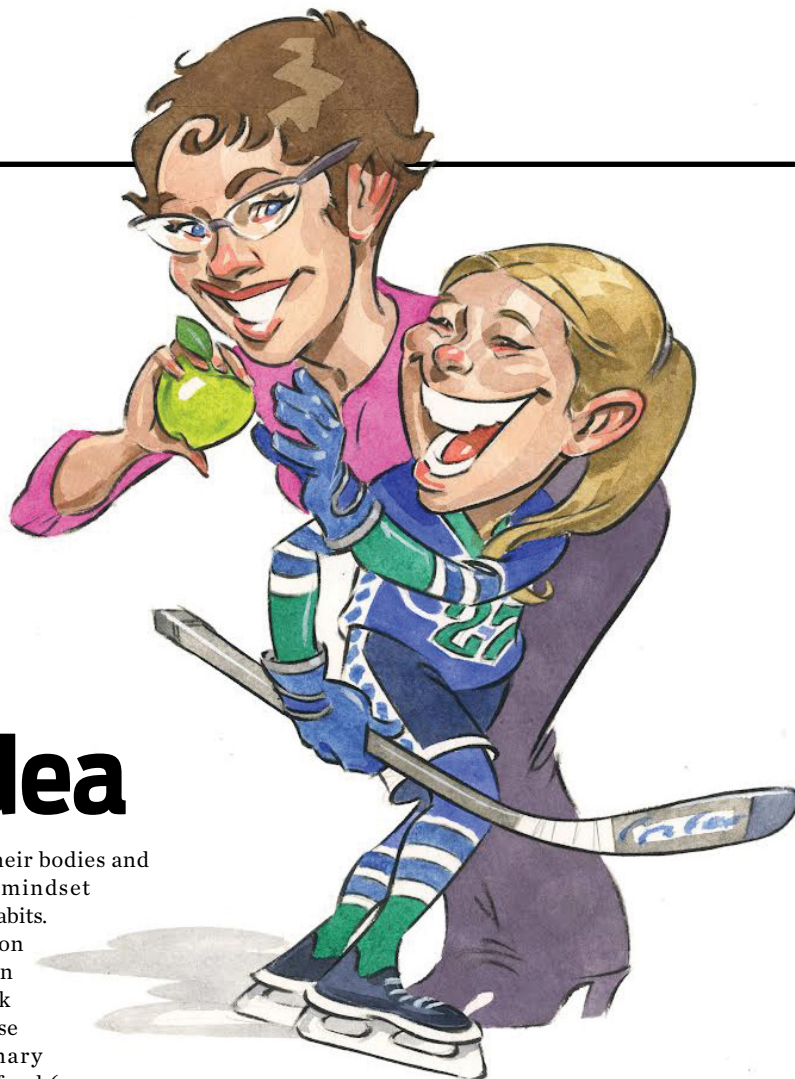
All good points we should incorporate. But what about those hectic mornings where we're rushing off for an away game, the kids are late getting out of bed and we forgot to gas up the car the night before?

"That's life," Aprik says. "Healthful eating does not require you to be perfect."

Aprik recommends staying on top of consistent, healthy eating by planning and packing ahead. Engage your kids by having them participate in grocery shopping and packing their own lunches.

For your the pregame plan, focus on foods that are rich in carbohydrates, moderate in protein and low in fat. Aprik says fruits, vegetables, soups, trail mix and pretzels are good sources of electrolytes, which assist with hydration.

Beverages can be an added source of those nutrients too. Water should



FIVE WAYS TO EAT LIKE A CHAMPION

1. Plan, prep and pack ahead
2. Incorporate quality carbohydrates, protein, fruits and veggies with every meal
3. Aim to eat every 3-4 hours. Plan meals and snacks around training times
4. Sip on fluids and eat water-containing foods (fruits, veggies, soups, smoothies, etc.)
5. Eat snacks containing carbohydrates and protein one hour before training and 30 minutes after for fueling and recovery

always be a component of pregame routines.

After the game, don't forget the importance of hydration. Quality hydration can come from sipping on a variety of fluids and eating high-water foods throughout the day.

"This is a more effective strategy than chugging large volumes of fluid right before or during games and practices," Aprik says.

Eating foods and drinking fluids that contain electrolytes, like fruits, veggies, milk, smoothies, soup, trail mix and pretzels can also help the body hold on to fluids and prevent those muscle cramps.

If you haven't done so already, start now. Good nutrition habits can set kids up for lifelong health and a positive body relationship.

"Good habits help them immediately as well-improved sports performance, better energy, better sleep, better focus in school, enhanced healing and recovery, prevention of injuries and support of optimal growth and development," Aprik says.

That's definitely food for thought. ☆