



Food for Fuel

In order to operate at peak efficiency, a child's body needs the right nutrients. Armed with a little bit of nutritional knowledge and planning, you can help your son or daughter compete with even more energy and effort.

TAKING THE FIELD

Good nutrition goes hand in hand with physical activity. So what should you give your kids before they take the field for a game or practice? Focusing on carbohydrates is a good place to start. Carbohydrates are the foods that fuel muscles and are easily digestible compared to proteins and fats, especially in growing children. Some good carbohydrate-rich choices are cereals, pasta, rice or yogurt.

And remember to give your kids a meal at least one to three hours before competition. This will give them time to digest their food and have them focused and ready to play.

SUITABLE SNACKS

There are also plenty of nourishing, healthy snacks available, such as nuts, sunflower seeds, peanut butter

sandwiches and bagels. Another great snack idea is fresh, colorful fruits and vegetables. They're naturally sweet snacks that also contain the fiber and nutrients kids need.

Make sure to avoid giving kids sugary snacks like candy, pudding, pastries and soda. Foods high in sugar content cause energy peaks and valleys, which leave kids tired, irritable and unable to concentrate.

AFTER THE GAME

What kids eat after a game or practice is just as important as what they eat before. Your child's body will be rebuilding muscle tissue and replenishing energy for up to 24 hours after competition. So it's important that the post-game meal be a balance of lean protein, carbohydrates and fat.

In the end, it's all about healthy, active kids. Making good nutritional choices for your kids will not only give them a competitive edge, but you'll also be reinforcing good nutritional habits to last a lifetime.