

# Fueling our Active Youth

By Kendra Cendana, B.S. Exercise Science, Sports Nutrition Specialist

We are a community of busy and athletic adults who have children who are equally as active. We feed ourselves right and try to set a good example but why do we so often see kids fueling up at fast food restaurants or showing up to practices and games on an empty stomach. It is important to provide proper nutrition and hydration to these young athletes as they sweat it out on the fields and courts of our community.

On a daily basis, athletes should be eating a variety of food that include whole grain carbohydrates, fruits & vegetables that vary like the colors of the rainbow, dairy products that provide calcium, lean proteins (chicken, quinoa, fish) and healthy, satiating mono-unsaturated fats (almonds, avocados, peanut butter). Water is still the best source of hydration when training. Sports drinks have their time and place when participating in activities over 1-2 hours but are most often unnecessary on a daily basis and can cause an over-intake of calories.

On the days leading up to a big tournament in which athletes will be asked to play repeated games in a single day, it is paramount that they not only train smart physically but nutritionally as well. Here are some guidelines for the days prior to a tournament.

## **Thursday & Friday:**

1. **Nutrition:** Encourage players to consume healthy carbohydrates. Whole wheat breads, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, etc. Strive to consume a blend of five fruits & vegetables per day.
2. **Hydration:** Encourage players to drink extra water two days before the tournament. Voiding clear urine is a good sign that the athlete is adequately hydrated.
3. **Taper:** Reduce physical activity at least a day or two before the tournament. This reduction in intensity will allow the muscles to store additional glycogen (carbohydrate that has converted to muscle fuel). If the fuel tank is only drained 25% from lower intensity, it can be filled faster than a tank that has been totally drained from a hard practice.
4. **Carbohydrate Loading:** Although this sounds like an opportunity to consume vast quantities of food; keep consumption of nutrition at a normal level with an increased portion coming from carbohydrates (3.5-4.5 g/lb) on Thursday and fairly light on Friday night. The body will top off the muscle fuel tank from normal food consumption. The key here is the "taper," the reduction in physical activity preceding game day, which will not drain the muscle fuel tank.
5. **Take a walk and stretch:** a nice 5-10 minute walk and then a stretch will help increase the range of motion of the joints, helping to prevent injury.

## **Saturday/Game Day Breakfast (2-4 hours ahead): Low GI (Glycemic Index) foods**

- Oatmeal & milk
- Eggs, toast & fruit
- Healthy cereal & orange juice
- Yogurt & low fat granola
- Pancakes & small amount of syrup
- Avoid fats
- Meal replacement CHO drink if nervous stomach

## **Pre-Game Snack (one hour): Higher GI foods that the body can utilize for fuel quickly**

- White bagel (small amount and dry)
- Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Rice Chex
- Rice Cakes
- White rice & pasta
- Ripe banana, orange
- Sports gel & WATER
- Pre-activity formulated sports drinks

### **Mid Match/Half Time Hydration:**

No food recommended as digestion capabilities are diminished. Consume at least 8 oz. of sports drink. Although a properly fueled and hydrated athlete can use only water for a single game, tournaments often require multiple games on multiple days. In order to keep glycogen stores from being completely depleted, consideration should be given to consuming a sports drink during the first and subsequent games.

### **Post Game Nutrition:**

Players need to consume carbohydrates, electrolytes, water & protein within the first 20-30 minutes post-activity. The first three will bring the body's fuel balance up to par for the next game. Protein aids in muscle repair. Keep a constant flow of fluids between games. This is often the time you can gain the edge over your competition that gorges on fast food between matches.

### ***Post-game snack suggestions (20-30 minutes):***

- Chocolate milk
- Orange Juice and medium bagel
- Cranberry Juice & nuts
- Fruit Yogurt & pretzels
- Soups
- Sandwiches: roast beef, turkey, or chicken
- Smoothies with protein boost & bagel
- Bananas & milk
- Dry cereal & milk
- Pre-mixed recovery drink

Different athletic arenas will call for different styles of preparation but that is just the key...PREPARE! Train hard and fuel smart for a positive athletic experience.

Kendra has over 18 years of professional fitness experience. She is the owner and master trainer for fitCHIX Bootcamp in Rocklin. She also maintains an active personal training practice, kiFIT Personal Training. Kendra has a degree in Exercise Science as well as extensive training in sports nutrition, yoga, pilates, kickboxing and athletic conditioning. Kendra is also a runner with multiple half/full marathons under her belt. She is currently training for her first triathlon and leads a weekly women's running group. Kendra has been a part of RunRocklin for the past 4 years. You can reach Kendra at [kendracendana@usa.net](mailto:kendracendana@usa.net)