



# 3 PLAYS FOR A HEALTHY TEAM



There are 3 simple things you can do during practices and games to keep youth athletes healthy and performing their best!

## 1 Boost active time by 10-15 minutes.

- Keep all players moving by using small group activities or by playing small-sided games.
- Try adapting well-known children's games to your sport (e.g. Red Light, Green Light).
- Teach players light-intensity movements that they can do while waiting to enter an activity.

### *Why it's important*

Practice may last an hour, but studies show that children are typically moving for less than half the time.\*

Keeping players moving for an additional 10-15 minutes improves fitness and keeps players engaged.

## 2 Make water the easy choice.

- Remind players to bring 1-2 full water bottles to practices and games.
- At the beginning of the season, let parents and players know that doctors recommend water, not sports drinks or other sugary drinks.
- Consider a "water only" policy for your team.

### *Why it's important*

Players who drink water and eat a healthy diet will perform their best.

Sticking to water also helps players avoid the added sugar in beverages like sports drinks, which contain almost 9 teaspoons of sugar in a 20 oz bottle!

## 3 Make snacks fruits or vegetables.

- If your team has a snack, ask parents to rotate bringing fruits or vegetables like sliced oranges, apples, or carrot sticks.
- For tournaments, encourage players to pack a healthy lunch.
- If players eat a healthy meal before practice, they probably don't even need a snack!

### *Why it's important*

Unhealthy treats can add up since children often have them outside of sports, too. Desserts, soda, and pizza are the top three sources of calories in a typical child's diet.

Have fruits or vegetables for snacks and save the treats for special occasions.



Find more tips, trainings, and resources on promoting healthy youth sports at [www.CoachingHealthyHabits.org](http://www.CoachingHealthyHabits.org)

\*Leek et al. (2010), Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine; Wickel & Eisenmann (2007), Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine.



# HEALTHY FUEL FOR HEALTHY ATHLETES

## BEFORE

### 3+ Hours Before



Healthy meal or snack that includes whole grains, fruits, and vegetables to fuel muscles.



Water

### 30-60 Minutes Before



Fruits like bananas, clementines, or apples



Water

#### Ideas for 3+ hours before:



Tuna or turkey sandwich with carrots  
Peanut butter & banana sandwich  
Eggs & whole wheat toast with melon slices

Avoid eating fried or fatty fast foods. These foods take a long time to digest, using energy your muscles need to help you play your best, and potentially causing stomach cramps.

## DURING

### Halftime or During Practice



Fruit, if needed



Water (sports drinks aren't recommended)

#### Ideas for halftime or during practice:



Orange or apple slices, strawberries, melon, sugar snap peas, pepper strips

During a typical sports practice, kids aren't as active as many people think. On average, players are active for only half the practice. Consider if a snack is even necessary.

## AFTER

### Recovery or Cool Down



Healthy meal or snack within one hour after play



Water

#### Ideas for recovery:



Fruit smoothie  
Hummus & carrots or cucumber  
Yogurt with banana or granola

Save the treats for a special occasion! Eat healthy foods that will replenish muscles and help you stay energized for your next activity.

## Tournament Days:



**Less than 1 hour before the next game?** Have a fruit or vegetable as a snack like a banana, apple, or carrot sticks.



**2 hours or more between games?** Pack a healthy meal that includes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains and skip the concession stand treats. You can also help your concession stand introduce healthier options. Contact [HealthyKidsOutOfSchool@tufts.edu](mailto:HealthyKidsOutOfSchool@tufts.edu) to learn more.



Visit [www.CoachingHealthyHabits.org](http://www.CoachingHealthyHabits.org) for additional resources



# THE BEST SPORTS DRINK FOR YOUTH ATHLETES

## 5 WAYS WATER WINS



1

### It keeps kids hydrated.

Drinking water throughout the day, especially before, during, and after practices and games, is the best way to keep players hydrated to perform their best.

BEFORE



Drink 1 to 1 ½ cups (or 8-12 oz) of water 30 minutes before

DURING



Take water breaks every 15-20 minutes

AFTER



Replenish with water after play to stay hydrated

2

### Doctors recommend it.

Some coaches and parents think that the electrolytes in sports drinks are important for youth athletes, but the fact is, kids don't need sports drinks and **doctors recommend water**.\*

Sports drinks were developed for *professional* athletes to help prevent severe dehydration and improve performance during extended competition. Kids don't have the same needs.

3

### It beats out sugary beverages.

When kids stick to water, they avoid the **large amounts of added sugar** in drinks like iced teas, fruit drinks, and sports drinks. Added sugar provides no nutritional benefit, and it's a big culprit in unhealthy weight gain.

4

### It's kid friendly.

Studies show that when water is in plain sight, kids drink more. Make sure your athlete has a water bottle with them throughout the day so they can come to practices and games well hydrated.

Athletes should bring at least **2 full water bottles** to every practice and game so they don't run out. Consider volunteering to bring extra water for the team, so every player can refill.

5

### It's free.

Sticking to tap water **saves money and time** at the store.

For a simple, inexpensive twist to plain water, try adding fresh or frozen fruit, like lime wedges or frozen berries.

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