

10 Nutrition Tips for Parents of Young Athletes



The following article is written by Tom Sullivan from Sullivan Training Systems. I think it is appropriate for today's parents and wanted to share it with you.

It is your responsibility as parents to start developing good habits for your children in all aspects of life. Nutrition is no different. We need to start building a solid foundation of habits that lead to higher levels of performance and health. Below I have put together 10 simple tips that you can use immediately to get your kids eating better.

1. **Breakfast.** A good breakfast includes eggs, cheese, meat, whole wheat toast or English muffin, juice (100% variety) and some water. Note that a good breakfast does NOT include Pop Tarts, Cereal, Toaster Strudels, Donuts, Muffins, or any other processed food. This tip is number 1 for a reason. We need to start getting our athletes used to eating a large healthy breakfast.
2. **More water, less sugar.** We need to get them used to drinking water as the main beverage. Read the labels of many sports drinks. Do you think it is a good idea to have them downing that much sugar? Same goes for soda. Some of the newer sports drinks are low in sugar and are a good alternative since they do have electrolytes which help with recovery.
3. **Less Drive Thru.** This goes for all drive through. If you can get it at a drive thru, you probably don't want it in your body or your child's. If you are in a pinch for time, go to a sub shop and order something that looks like grilled chicken, or steak wrap accompanied by a small bag of chips and some water.
4. **Fruits and Vegetables.** Try to find a couple of each that your kid likes and start putting them in lunches and dinners immediately. Don't send a granola bar to school, send a baggie of fresh berries or a banana.
5. **Home cooked meals.** These should make up the majority of the kids' diet. This is where they will get the most nutrients that will fuel their active lives.
6. **Get rid of big pasta dinners before games.** The old carb loading feasts that often accompany a team dinner are a waste of time. Overloading on starchy pasta that isn't really good for you in the first place is a bad idea. The kids will have better results from a normal healthy meal.
7. **Cell Phones.** While not really a nutrition tip, I thought this was a good opportunity to sneak this in. Seeing an 11 year old texting on a cell phone is puzzling (does this help their health or posture?). I have no problem with giving them a phone for emergency purposes or when they are going to need to be picked up, but kids should be interacting with each other, not with a screen and key pad.
8. **Candy Bars.** Candy bars are filled with "crud" and toxic chemicals. If kids really like them, try to trade them for Cliff Bars. These things are delicious and are made from mostly organic ingredients and would be a much better snack.
9. **Meal Size.** Kids are at an important age where portion control is crucial. They shouldn't be eating until they can't move; this only cements habits of overeating in the future and keeps our obesity problem in American going. Teach them to eat until satisfied not stuffed. I hate seeing obese kids; it is usually not their fault.

10. Don't become a food Nazi. Just because I have given you these tips doesn't mean you need to restrict everything and make their diets strict. Use them as guidelines and remember that they are still kids. What is going overboard? Drive thru more than once every 10 days is no good, but neither is counting their calories or grams of protein consumed. Find a happy medium and start building good habits

****Remember to:**

- 1) Always plan ahead for what you are going to eat
- 2) Obtain adequate amounts of protein
- 3) Work on your flexibility and
- 4) Supplement your diet with a fish oil and multivitamin

Let me know if I can help. Email me at architechsports@gmail.com

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