

## How to eat for youth soccer tournaments

Written by Mark Powell

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Soccer tournaments can include four or five games within two days - a grueling schedule for any player. It's important to

fuel players well during these matches.

Steps:

1. Encourage kids to eat a lot. Youth players should fuel like endurance athletes. They need calories and more calories.
2. Feed them often. Players should have a good meal one to two hours before playing and snack on fruit and/or sports drinks during the games.
3. Choose the right foods. Fruits, whole grains and easy-to-digest foods (e.g. not fried) are the best choices.
4. Avoid junk food. It can hamper performance.
5. Choose right on the road. Even fast food is fine if you make the best choices. Try to choose steamed or baked over breaded or fried foods.
6. Provide extra water and rolls or bread with each meal.
7. Make sure that food is available. Don't count on tournament concessions stands or supermarkets, which may not offer healthy foods or be convenient to your location. Bring a stash from home to be sure.
8. Refuel. Post-game nutrition is often overlooked, but nutritious foods speed muscle recovery for the next game.

Tips:

Feed players even if they say they don't feel hungry. The appetite can dull with excitement and adrenaline, as well as a rise in body temperature during exertion. Start with fluids if necessary.

Have players eat as a team. This encourages camaraderie and is helpful in spurring appetite.

Pack nonperishables in your child's soccer bag. Include a constant supply of foods such as pretzels, crackers or sports bars.

Save treats, including candy, ice cream and fast foods, for after the game.

Scope the eateries while on the road. When traveling to tournaments, scout the supermarkets

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and restaurant choices when you arrive at your destination.

A lot of potassium is needed when playing soccer in order to minimize cramps. Try feeding your child bananas and oranges. Juices that contain high potassium are great for before and during the game, too.

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