



JILL CASTLE

CHILDHOOD NUTRITION EXPERT

HEALTHY SNACKS LIST: FUEL ATHLETES FOR SPORT

APRIL 18, 2018 BY **JILL CASTLE, MS, RDN**

What if you had a go-to **healthy snacks list** your young athlete would eat for game time and practice?

Wouldn't life be a little bit easier?

In this article, I'm diving into what a healthy snack for an athlete looks like, along with a free healthy snacks list.

You'll learn:

- what healthy snacks for athletes can do for them
- how to plan out snacks for athletes, from homemade to store-bought

- my rules of thumb to make sure your athlete gets the nutrition that's most important for training and competition



Healthy Snacks for Athletes

You know healthy snacks are ideal for the growing athlete.

If you look around, though, there are more examples of *unhealthy*

snack foods than there are of healthy ones for your child. Unhealthy snacks don't truly fuel and satisfy your child, especially if he's a young athlete.

Just take a **look at the concession stand**. Often, it is loaded with high fat, sugary foods that aren't appropriate for game day.

 Trending Content from The Nourished Child



Unfortunately, **sideline snacks brought by well-intentioned parents** are not much better.

Just the other day, a mom was describing the box of donuts her child was offered after the lacrosse game. Really?!

What Snack Should My Athlete Eat?

It's no surprise that one of the most popular questions I'm asked by parents of young athletes like you is:

What should I give my child to eat before he goes to practice or a game?

It's a great question.

The answer is pretty simple: give your young athlete a healthy snack.

While the answer is simple, you might be wondering *what* exactly is a healthy snack...

Is it a piece of fruit?

A bar?

Crackers or pasta?

The question is so common, it's the reason I created a Healthy Snacks List for you.

Fueling your athlete shouldn't be a mystery and it shouldn't be difficult.

My healthy snacks list gives you an array of healthy snack ideas plus a list of foods you can use to pick and choose easy snacks throughout the week.

I take the mystery out of feeding your athlete!

You can even use my healthy snacks list to create a grocery shopping list of snack foods you rotate through week to week. (This always keeps variety high.)

Click on the orange box below to grab the list.

[Want New Snack Ideas for Your Athlete? Click Here!](#)

Snacks for Athletes: Insider Tips

While all snack foods should offer up a healthy punch of nutrition for kids — even the run-of-the-mill **after-school snack** — the best snacks for your young athlete are ones that:

provide easy to consume fuel for his active body, whether he's training or competing

are actually eaten

cover his hunger and appetite

How to Plan Healthy Snack Foods for Athletes

When I help young athletes and their parents plan healthy snacks, I use a few key considerations. I'm sharing these with you here:

1. Make Sure Key Nutrients are Included

The nutrients that are the most important for an exercising athlete are carbohydrates and protein.

Carbohydrates offer the preferred source of fuel for exercising muscles.

Protein is key to building muscle and repairing it after strenuous exercise.

If you target these nutrients when planning healthy snacks, you'll offer the fuel sources needed for optimal performance, while helping your athlete feel good.

The presence of protein also helps your athlete **ward off excess hunger**.

Snack foods that contain only a carbohydrate source, like fresh fruit or crackers, are fine for short events, practices or less intensive exercises.

But they aren't ideal for the young athlete who is exercising for over an hour...and that usually means training.



You Need a
Healthy Snacks List
for Sports

2. Be Strategic! Not Every Athlete Needs a Snack

When does your young athlete need a healthy snack?

Again, this reflects on the intensity and duration of your athlete's exercise schedule and routine.

For example, if you've got a little soccer player who has a 45-minute practice, he may not need any additional sports snack outside of his regular eating plan.

However, if you're the parent of a high school basketball player or swimmer, she will probably need a more substantial snack.

My rule of thumb is:

If your child is exercising **for less than an hour**, he probably doesn't need an extra snack outside of his routine meal plan.

Alternatively, if your athlete is exercising for **over an hour**, in an intense sport like swimming, rowing or sports involving running, plan a heftier snack, or even a 4th meal to cover energy needs for exercise.

Examples:

A rower who participates in an extended training session (two hours) may need a peanut butter sandwich and a glass of milk before practice.

A volleyball player, who also practices for a long time but at a lower

intensity, may do well with a slice of peanut butter toast.

Give your athlete plenty of time to digest his snack. Generally, she'll need a half hour to an hour to digest a light, carbohydrate-based snack (ie, granola bar, toast, fruit, or dry cereal).

For heavier snacks that include combinations of nutrients (protein, carbohydrate and fat), allow an hour or two for digestion prior to exercise.

3. Always Try to Add Nutrition

The questions you should be asking yourself as you plan your athlete's healthy snacks are:

How can I add nutrition?

Where can I bring in variety?

How can I plan healthy snacks on the go for my athlete?

Here's the bad news: There are plenty of foods around that are full of empty calories.

Yes, they have calories, but they contain few to no nutrients.

Hello candy, chips, and dessert!

Simply said, these foods don't *add* nutritional value to your growing

athlete's diet.

Instead, because you're supporting the growth and development of your child as well as his athletic performance, you want to **go for wholesome, real food**.

So keep this in mind as you think about healthy snack ideas.

Wholesome, nutritious food will fuel his growth *and* his athletic performance.

Healthy Snacks List Ideas

When you compile your list of healthy snacks, be sure to include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein sources, dairy, and healthy fats.

More specifically, milk and dairy products like cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt work great as both a protein and carb source.

All fruits, including fresh, frozen, dried and even canned in their own juices.

Other protein sources like hard-boiled egg, nut butter, nuts, beans and bean dip, deli meats, and jerky all offer a good source.

Wholesome, pre-packaged snacks can work too. Try granola or granola bars, bricks of milk or 100% juice, whole grain crackers and cheese, or packaged trail mix.

Check out my Healthy Snacks List for Athletes, where I give you 70 different snack ideas that creatively combine carbohydrate, protein and fat.

You can grab my list by clicking on the box below:

[Want New Snack Ideas for Your Athlete? Click Here!](#)

Which healthy snacks does your athlete eat to fuel his sports performance?

Other Sports Nutrition Resources

For more about the principles of sports nutrition for young athletes, [buy my book](#), Eat Like a Champion.

Want your athlete to learn how to properly fuel his body?

[My program Eat Like a Champion](#) (based on my book) is designed to teach and train your young athlete what to eat, when to eat, and the general principles around sports nutrition for growing bodies.

Check it out below!



EAT LIKE A CHAMPION

*A SPORTS NUTRITION COURSE FOR YOUNG ATHLETES
BY JILL CASTLE, MS, RDN*

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KRIS CAIRNS

FEBRUARY 9, 2017 AT 2:36 PM

I have a 6'7" 16 yr old son. 225lbs. I worry he doesnt get enough protein. Heavy into sports, basketball and football. He can get picky and has a sweet tooth. He seems to eat normal portions, but what snacks are available that incorporate protein and are portable? He spends a lot of time at practices and cant refrigerate things.

JILL

FEBRUARY 12, 2017 AT 12:06 PM

Nuts, nut butter (a small jar with a spoon in his bag can be helpful), jerky, brick packs of milk...

LB

NOVEMBER 6, 2016 AT 12:45 AM

Hi Jill,

I have a 10 year swimmer who's is home by 8pm after a hour long swim practice 4 times a week. She eats her 2nd dinner when she's home and goes to bed at 9pm. Is this much many calories too close to bedtime? Or is this ok since she is swimming is feels hungry afterwards.

Thanks,

LB

JILL

NOVEMBER 8, 2016 AT 4:50 PM

Yes, that is fine. 😊

LAURIE

OCTOBER 26, 2016 AT 11:58 AM

Hey Jill,

Any way you can email me the link for the 70 snacks directly? Having trouble downloading, it keeps just jumping to the THANK YOU page and I tried two browsers, multiple laptops. would really like to print this out!

JILL

OCTOBER 26, 2016 AT 12:11 PM

Check your spam box! You should receive a separate email after the thank you post—depending on your security settings, it may have gone to spam.



I'm Jill, a registered dietitian, childhood nutritionist, and mom from Connecticut. I use this blog and podcast to inspire you to feed and nourish your child, inside and out.

[READ JILL'S STORY →](#)



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