

The below illustration was sent to me by Coach Mike last week. At some point in life we switch from thinking of food as energy and refer to it as calories. In my opinion, 'calories' have a more negative tone, implying something to avoid; whereas, 'energy' seems to encourage consumption.



Your child athlete needs calories, which is energy, the fuel they need to keep going. Teens need somewhat more calories than when they were a bit younger. Teenage boys on average need 1,800 to 2,600 calories a day if they're 11 to 13 years, and 2,200 to 3,200 calories a day if they're 14 to 18 years of age. Teenage girls need more, too: 1,800 to 2,200 calories a day if they're ages 11 to 13, and 1,800 to 2,400 calories a day if they're age 14 to 18. Gender, body size, growth

rate and activity level specifically determine how many calories teens need. Those involved in strenuous physical activity such as soccer, basketball, football or other sports may need 3,500 calories (more or less) daily. While I'm a believer that a calorie is a calorie when concerned for weight loss/gain, I also believe not all foods are created equal.

For example: 1 slice of king cake (2 ½ inches, about the width of an iPhone) = 250 calories. Those calories contain fat, carbohydrates and protein. All three macro nutrients, so good right?

Not quite. Most of the fat is saturated as it comes from butter/lard and egg. Saturated fat is the "bad fat" which is responsible for increasing your bad cholesterol. Child athletes and adults all need fat; however, saturated fat should be kept at less than 10% of your calorie intake. If your daily calorie intake is 2000 calories, that is 20grams of saturated fat per day. The slice of king cake has approximately 4g of saturated fat, so 20% of your saturated fat for the day.

The carbohydrates in the king cake are simple carbohydrates, meaning little to no fiber. The fiber goal for the day is 25grams. The king cake only offers about 1 gram, so no impact on the goal of 25g/day.

There is some protein in this treat, but only about 5 grams. On average an athlete needs about .75g/pound body weight per day

(100 pounds x .75 = 75g/day). If you consumed 250 calories of chicken breast you would earn about 45grams of protein.

I **LOVE** king cake (Haydel's to be specific), and thank goodness it is only around for about a month annually. I am not asking for you to avoid king cake, it was just the seasonal example. Every day, all year, you will need energy, but you will have options to meet your energy needs. I believe all foods can fit into a healthy lifestyle, but more often than not, you need to make the healthy choice. So what's the difference between calories and energy? Calories are the extra that should be avoided or limited, where energy is what you need and should consciously choose the best food to meet your energy needs.

When kids (and adults) get hungry they reach for the first thing they can find. Keep healthy foods in quick reach. When it comes to your child athlete, don't restrict their energy, but assure it is the best source of energy. Sorry, adults, even if you are physically keeping up with your athlete, you likely need to restrict and choose wisely (age, never nice).

#### Monthly challenge:

Teenage Athlete- Before you eat, ask yourself, "Is this the healthiest option?"

Parents – Have quick easy healthy foods on hand for you and your kids!