



Last month the focus was on the parent, to *“Teach your children well”*. While leading by example is important, keep in mind that your child has very different needs than you, as an adult. Not only do your kids need to eat to compete; they also need to eat to grow.

### **Carbohydrates – those you NEED, those you should LIMIT**

I mentioned last month that *THE KIND* granola bar company dumped 45,485 pounds of sugar in Times Square to show how much added sugar children in the U.S. are eating. Sugar, along with the satisfying taste of fat is a large reason why *carbs* are given such a bad rap. But, in the athlete’s world, limiting carbohydrates can be a real detriment to their performance.

Carbohydrates should make up about **half** of your child’s calories. Athletes, and all Americans, are encouraged to eat carbohydrates. Specifically, we are encouraged to eat “good carbs,” such as, fruit, vegetables, whole grains and low fat dairy. However, in reality we eat too many desserts, snacks and sugary beverages. While our athletes may have a little more leeway for a sweet treat due to the amount of exercise they do, sugar isn’t what our athletes should be consuming to fuel their activity.

Balance is always the key. Your children need carbohydrates (healthy and treats) to grow and fuel their busy, physical day. Too few carbohydrates will cause under-fueled muscles and low energy and too much can cause undesirable weight gain.

### **Finding a balance**

Children are limited in their ability to store carbohydrates in muscle and don’t build up large stores of glycogen like adults. Additionally, females, specifically, store fewer carbs than males. Therefore, young athletes don’t need to “carbo load” before exercise or competition. Rather you want to make sure the daily intake of carbohydrates are consistent and, should account for about half of their caloric intake.

The level of training will affect your child’s nutritional needs.

The younger swimmers (swimming an hour 1-3x a week) will of course need to be mindful of good nutrition; however, they won’t have as great of a need to boost their carbohydrate intake as the teen athlete swimming 2 hours daily, 6 days a week, plus strength training.

Let your training schedule help guide your carbohydrate intake. If your child is a recreational

swimmer the general guideline of consuming approximately 45%-65% of daily calories from carbohydrates is sufficient. Those more elite athletes: training daily, doing doubles, resistance training, perhaps even active in other sports, can get more specific with your carbohydrate intake.

- *Low-intensity exercise or skill-based activity:* 1.3-2.3g of carbohydrate per pound per day.
- *Moderate exercise (1 hour per day):* 2.3-3.2g of carbohydrate per pound per day.
- *Endurance training (1-3 hours per day):* 2.7-4.5g of carbohydrate per pound per day.
- *Extreme training program (4-5 hours per day):* 3.6-5.5g of carbohydrate per pound per day.

For example: a 115 pound endurance training athlete =

- ✓ “Endurance Training” = training 1-3hrs/day.
- ✓ The athlete’s carbohydrate needs are =  
 $3.6g \text{ (avg)} \times 115\# = 414g$  of carbohydrates/day.
- ✓ What is a “serving” of carbohydrates? “1 serving” of carbohydrate = 15g. How do you determine a 15g serving of carbohydrate?
  - 1 slice of bread
  - ½ cup beans
  - Small apple



- ½ berries
- 1 cup milk
- 1/3 cup grains (rice, barely, quinoa)
- 1 ounce dry fruit
- ✓ Check labels for “total carbohydrates” in a serving (for every 15g = 1 serving, so 45g = 3 servings)
- ✓ Total servings per day of carbohydrate for this athlete = 27-28.

Snacks will be key to getting in enough carbohydrates in your day. Details on healthy snacking will come soon. In the meantime keep these tips in mind:

- ✓ Reflect on your activity level and assess if your carbohydrates are adequate.
- ✓ Determine if your carbohydrates are from the recommended sources: whole grain, fruit, vegetables, and low fat dairy.
- ✓ Spread out your carbohydrates consistently throughout your day to allow for proper fuel while avoiding hunger.

### **Appetite, Hunger and Hangry!**

A challenge even for us adults is to honestly determine... *Am I hungry?* When it comes to your kids, we often make assumptions based on ourselves; however, kids really can still be hungry even if you aren't after eating. Kids (unlike

adults) are still growing. The true test to hunger is the apple test... (Really, any healthy choice will do). If your child is always asking for food because they are “hungry”, well then, always offer them healthy options. If your child is truly hungry, they will eat the healthy food. If your child is not hungry, and just really wanted to eat ice cream, because it is just so yummy, they will refuse the healthy foods.

Kids in general have larger appetites, kids who exercise have even larger appetites. Encourage your child to question their hunger, slow down their eating, offer water, and provide seconds of healthy food options.

### **Yes, still have a treat**

To be a successful athlete also includes enjoying food, and the yummy, indulgent treats that surround us. These foods just shouldn't be part of an athlete's everyday routine. Find ways to swap out sugary carbohydrates with whole grains, fruits, vegetables and low fat dairy. But, also find ways to enjoy treats in moderation.

As Halloween quickly approaches, come up with a plan to “treat” your kids with candy, but not overdo.

### Monthly challenge:

Teenage Athlete- Review your carbohydrate intake throughout your day. Do you choose fruit over candy? Do you choose milk over ice cream? Aim to include “good carbohydrates”. Calculate your needs and try keeping track to see how your carbohydrates add up.

Parents – Continue to make healthy choices for yourself and have healthy options available for you and your kids. Take time to listen to your child's “hunger” and offer nutritious options to fuel their growth and athleticism.

