

Healthy Team Snacks

As the coach of a team, you impact children in positive ways on and off the field. They get a chance to have fun with you while being active and developing life skills like cooperation, communication and leadership. You can also help them develop the important life skill of eating well. It's a natural fit with being active.

Re-think the team snack

Pre-packaged snacks loaded with sugar have become the norm in recreational sports for kids. These types of snacks aren't ideal for aspiring athletes. The fact is, children in rec sports don't need a snack at all simply because they don't play hard for long enough to require refuelling. The only thing children in rec sports need is water. As a coach, you can take the lead to arrange if and how your team will incorporate snacks.

Consider these options:

1. 'Water only' policy for the team

Explain to parents that there will not be a sign-up sheet for team snacks because water is the best thing for players and the only thing they need. All that parents need to do is pack a water bottle for their own player.

Benefits:

- No need to make a team snack schedule
- Busy parents don't have to scramble to prepare a team snack
- Parents can stay and watch their children instead of heading out to get a snack for the team
- No added pressure for families with financial constraints
- No 'guilt' for parent/player who forgot it was their turn to bring the snack.

2. 'Bring your own veg/fruit and water' policy

Let parents and players know that water is all the players need during and after practice. If parents want to bring a snack for their own child, ask them to bring a vegetable or fruit because it's the best food for young athletes.

Benefits:

- All the benefits of the 'water only' policy, PLUS:
- Kids get a chance to see their peers eating and enjoying vegetables and fruit
- Parents are supported in their efforts to get kids to eat well
- Kids learn from other adults besides their parents that healthy eating is important.

3. 'Veg/fruit only' voluntary team snack sign up

Some parents enjoy bringing a team snack and others, not so much. As the coach, you can suggest that bringing a team snack is voluntary but stipulate that those who volunteer should bring vegetables and/or fruit. Teams have had great success with this approach.

Benefits:

- Parents are supported in their efforts to get kids to eat well. Kids get plenty of treats but many don't get enough vegetables and fruit to support good health. Children are more likely to eat them if they are served with friends and there are no other choices.
- Takes the pressure off parents who have time and/or financial constraints for bringing a team snack
- Reduces concern for a player with common food allergies
- Sets a good example of food choices for players.

QUOTES

Did you know...children listen more closely to adults other than their parents? That's why coaches can have a big impact on the eating habits of kids.

"As a first time recreational sports mom, I was very surprised to see a 'snack sign-up sheet' circulating. Even more surprising were the suggestions of snacks to bring...eg. Granola bars, fruit snacks, drink boxes...etc. These snacks are loaded with sugar and definitely not the best for teeth. When it came my turn for snack I brought watermelon sticks and the kids LOVED them. Easy peasy and healthy."

ANDREA, T-BALL MOM

"I wish my daughter's team had the healthy snack program for her soccer league. Most parents were making trips to the grocery store to buy pre-packaged UN-healthy snacks and drinks when it was their turn to provide snack. The kids would have gobbled up whatever was provided to them at that time."

JULIE, SOCCER MOM

"The snack program turned out to be a great success for my team of 8 & 9 year olds. Once co-ordinated with the parents at the start of the season, it turned out to be very easy to implement as the season went on. It was very little trouble to the coaches, and it gave the kids something to look forward to each post-game. Fruit was the go-to menu item & the kids downed the platter each and every time with much enthusiasm. Definitely a program I will look at each year down the road."

CURT, ROOKIE REP BASEBALL COACH

"I thought this was a great idea, however, I wasn't sure how it would go over with the kids. It turns out, it was easy to do (slice up some watermelon, buy some cherries...kids love them!) and it worked out great!! If you put healthy food out...they will eat it!! And often come back for more. It kind of makes sense!"

STACE, BASEBALL MOM



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