



Nutritional Guidelines: Fueling Competitive Athletes

The AA Ringette Calgary program suggests that athletes significantly reduce or eliminate junk food and sugar laden treats, especially in the two-week period before tournaments or Championships.

Please visit the **Canada Food Guide for serving and food group guidelines:** food-guide.canada.ca.

Tips and Suggestions:

Hydration: All liquids count, including soups, milk and juices. Eight glasses (8 oz.) of water per day is commonly advised; however, drink to your thirst and energy. Two glasses (8 oz.) of water consumed two hours prior to training or competition will assist with hydration on the ice. During training or games, small sips are encouraged. Urine should be a pale yellow as opposed to clear (over-hydration) or dark yellow (under-hydration).

Fat: A necessary part of a healthy diet, use butter or margarine as a spread, and include salad dressings and heart-healthy fats, such as olive oil, nuts, and avocados. Highly-saturated fats, such as in cheese, aren't well-utilized as fuel for sports, so are best used as a complement for flavour instead of as a source of protein or fat.

Treats are a normal part of our daily fare! As an athlete, keep in mind how a 'treat' might work to fuel the body for athletic efforts. Desserts such as apple crisp, yogurt parfait, or (real) frozen yogurt will have more nutritional benefits compared to ice cream or donuts.

Carbohydrates: Fruits and vegetables, and starchy carbs (such as healthier muffins, breads, pasta and rice) help provide short-term energy. They work well combined with a protein (such as fish, meat or eggs) to offer sustained energy. **What does 'healthier' mean?** Consider whole grain flours/pastas/rice that contain more nutrition and additional protein. Be mindful of the amount of sugar in recipes (reduce the amount of chocolate chips, etc.).

Pre-game Meals and Snacks: Typically consist of carbs and protein two-to-three hours out from competition or training, perhaps with another carb option 30-60 minutes before (e.g. banana, small muffin, apple or electrolyte drink). Other options can include: fruit, nuts, peanut butter/banana wraps, granola bars, fruit, yogurt, raw vegetables and hummus, slow-cooked oatmeal.

Recovery Fuel Snack: Science indicates that a 4:1 carbs/protein balanced snack consumed within 20-30 minutes following competition or a hard workout aids with muscle glycogen recovery. Options can include: chocolate milk; a small PB and jam/banana sandwich; a small bag of pretzels with ¼ cup almonds. Keep it simple!

Less Fuss is Best: We know how much energy parents put into feeding their young athletes—variety and nutrition in meals can easily be achieved with real, whole foods. Again, keep it simple. For example, frozen mixed vegetables can be added to a pot of soup or a meat/pasta dish; or a crockpot of oatmeal baked overnight or throughout an afternoon can offer solid fuel for a pre- or post-game snack. Also, food allergies and preferences are now more easily accommodated through a variety of available options.

Restaurant Meals/Take Out: Athletes are encouraged to balance their plate with 3-4 food groups, ensuring protein is included. Pasta dishes should draw from a red tomato-based sauce as opposed to a cream-based sauce (which typically contains more fat than needed for fuel). Deep-fried isn't wise fuel, either. Take-out sandwiches should have a serving of protein in addition to ample vegetables.

—Tips and Suggestions provided by Kari A. Gregory, Personal Fitness Trainer/Success Coach

