

# Fuelling up young athletes

Meeting **energy requirements** and ensuring optimal nutrition is important in young athletes. Early years are pivotal for healthy growth and development; immune health; and to maintain concentration for school performance. Canteens can help school-aged athletes to refuel, repair and meet additional energy requirements.



**Carbohydrates** provide energy during sport. The best sources include wholegrain cereals and breads, legumes, fruit, starchy vegetables and dairy products. They provide energy for active bodies, fibre for gut health and a wide range of essential vitamins and minerals.

**Protein** is needed for recovery, growth and development. Lean protein sources include meat, seafood, eggs, dairy and alternatives (e.g. soy milk), legumes, nuts and seeds. Protein provides the necessary building blocks for growing and repairing muscles, and normal immune function.



**Healthy fats** are necessary for normal growth and development. Include unsaturated fats in main meals and snacks following exercise. Healthy sources of fats include reduced fat dairy, nuts, avocado and oily fish such as salmon and tuna.

**Fluids** are essential to stay hydrated. **Water is the best choice.** Drinking adequate fluids before, during and after exercise ensures the best performance.



Creating a canteen menu for students who participate in sport before or after school can help them to fuel up and replenish energy stores with nutritious foods, and not miss meals.

## Before exercise

For young athletes making a quick dash from school to sport, consider foods that are transportable and quick and easy to eat and do not require refrigeration. Foods should be rich in carbohydrates and low in fat and fibre to prevent stomach discomfort.

### Help students to fuel up with:

- Whole fresh fruit
- Small fruit tubs in fruit juice
- Frozen\* UHT breakfast drink or flavoured milk
- Trail mix: popcorn, whole grain cereals and dried fruit.

*\*UHT is important; if sold at lunch time this will be fully or partly defrosted after school but still safe to consume.*



## After exercise

For young athletes participating in sport before school, consider foods that sit comfortably in their stomach hours after training and contain quality carbohydrates to refuel the energy used by the muscles; lean protein for muscle growth and repair; healthy fats for additional energy needed for growth and development plus sufficient fluids to rehydrate.

### Help young athletes to refuel with:

- Porridge with banana
- Wholegrain toast
- Pikelets with fruit
- Scrambled eggs
- Baked beans
- Lean chicken and salad roll
- 375mL reduced fat plain or flavoured milk
- Cup of muesli with yoghurt
- Dairy based fruit smoothie.



For more sports nutrition information see [fueltogo.com.au](https://fueltogo.com.au)

## References

Broad, Elizabeth M. and Cox, Gregory R. (2008) 'What is the optimal composition of an athlete's diet?', European Journal of Sport Science, 8:2, 57 - 65

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