

KIDS' TEAMS TAKE TIME OUT

FOR A HYDRATING FRUIT LIKE WATERMELON

ORLANDO, FL -- Every year, millions of American kids head for baseball diamonds, basketball courts, lacrosse, soccer and football fields and hockey rinks to participate in team sports. These team sports, especially where the competition is very keen, put special nutritional demands on young bodies. Besides good overall dietary habits, one of the big concerns of parents and coaches of young athletes is the amount of fluids they get before, during and after sporting activities. These come in the form of water, sports drinks and fresh fruit snacks, like slices of watermelon.

Professional advice on children's dietary needs for parents and coaches of children who participate in sports activities is widely available in the media, including the Internet, most reliably from recognized government and sports nutrition authorities at leading universities. For instance, a new revised food pyramid, called MyPyramid, just introduced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is available at the web site www.mypyramid.gov and can be tailored to the dietary needs of youngsters, based on age, sex and how much exercise he or she gets in a day.

For a boost during athletic activities, mothers of team members often take turns providing snacks for their young athletes. "Ideally, these snacks should be a fruit with a high water content," says Barbara Levine, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Nutrition in Clinical Medicine and Director, Nutrition Information Center, Weill College of Medicine of Cornell University, New York, NY. "Watermelon is a favorite fruit among kids and is called the natural hydrator because it's 92% water. For sports activities, watermelon

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served in slices is easy for children and teens to eat. An inch-wide slice contains about a cup of fruit.

“And watermelon is more than a delicious thirst quencher,” says Dr. Levine. “It contains important vitamins and phytochemicals for growing bodies. A two-cup serving of watermelon has 20 percent of the daily recommended intake of Vitamin A and 25 percent of the daily value of Vitamin C. It’s also a source of potassium and a leader in the powerful antioxidant, lycopene.”

Keeping children well hydrated should be a priority, especially when they are members of competing sports teams. Suzanne Nelson Steen, D.Sc., R.D., head of the Husky Sports Nutrition Services in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics at the University of Washington in Seattle, offers excellent advice on the subject on the web site, www.momsteam.com. She suggests giving children bottles of fluids labeled with their names and for younger children, marking the side of the bottle to show how much they should drink each time and how many “gulps” to drink.

“Kids should drink on a schedule, not just when they are thirsty,” says Dr. Steen. “By the time your child says he is thirsty, he is *already dehydrated*,” she advises. She says that children should be reminded to drink 5 to 9 ounces of water (10 to 18 one-half ounce “gulps”) every 20 minutes during activity and teenagers should drink more.

Finally, Dr. Steen reminds parents that kids’ fluid intake needs to be supervised because children do not instinctively drink enough fluids to replace water losses. With a little planning, you can help ensure that your children are well hydrated and happy.

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