



The Sports
Medicine Clinic

Hydration and Nutrition Tips for Soccer

Many parents ask me about tips on nutrition for their kids. Specifically, what should they eat or what “sports drink” they should consume. Timing and quantity of nutrition are two very essential components as well. It is easy to overcompensate (overeat or drink) for the amount of perceived work performed as well.

Most athletes’ performance will significantly decline as they become dehydrated and exhaust their glycogen storage. So, it’s often the players that are able to maintain their performance over the entire 90 minutes that are the athletes that decide the outcome of the game. Here are some guidelines I use to use to keep my kids going for the full 90.

PRACTICE (workouts that last around 1 hour or less)

Hydration will trump nutrition in these situations. The body will use its’ stored energy (glycogen) to fuel the training. Therefore, you should concentrate more on water or water + electrolytes. Remember, the better it tastes, the more they will consume.

How Much fluid should I drink? There are many ways to determine this with the old saying “if you are thirsty, you are dehydrated” tossed around too often. Well, our goal is to prevent dehydration and a simple **rule** is that you should not lose more than 2% of your body weight during a workout.

Example: If your son weighs 150# at the beginning of practice and he weighs 144# after, he has lost 4% of his weight during that practice with a majority coming from fluid loss. To maintain the 2% rule, he would have to drink three pints (1 pint = 1 pound) or 1.5 liters (1 pint = 0.5 liters) to maintain a minimal level of hydration and to limit weight loss to 3 pounds (2% of 150#). Remember that in hot climates, he will lose more sweat and require more fluid.

GAMES (workouts lasting around 2 hours or more)

Prioritize fluids: Remember the 2% rule to stay hydrated. Also, consuming nutrition while dehydrated will lead to nausea (vomiting will soon follow). A simple **rule** is that the athlete should always pee at halftime and the urine should be colorless.

Don't forget to fuel: Most athletes will burn up around 600 calories per hour, so it is important to refuel during the game. A simple **rule** is to replace approx. 25% of the calories burned during the event.

Example: If your son is playing for one hour (600cal/hr), he should consume approx. 150 calories during that time period. Or in other words, he should eat one "gel" and drink ½ of a "sport drink" (the drink needs carbs, so "diet" drinks do not count for nutrition).

Stay Cool: Keeping their core temperature down will help with their performance and using an ice towel at halftime is very useful. Some athletes will even wear a cooling suit while "warming up" before the game.

RECOVERY

Don't forget to grab a healthy post game meal. Most will recommend eating within 1 hour of your workout. I like to replenish my lost carbs with fluid and lost protein with food. Also, don't underestimate an ice bath to help cool your core and serve as the original anti-inflammatory.

REMEMBER:

You can refuel in **minutes**, but rehydrating will take **hours**. Drink fluids and refuel your body to prevent dehydration and to make an impact on the game.