



Healthy Snacks: A Tip from our Safety Director

As we embark on another season of soccer, a frequently asked question by parents is, "What kind of snack should we bring to the field"?

Much of the fun in playing AYSO soccer has to do with the camaraderie that centers on snack time. While kids are eating and drinking, they chat about the game, discuss strategies, tell jokes, or recall events that happened at the school playground from the day before. Sometimes playing tag during snack time is as much fun as the soccer game itself.

Being out in the field, breathing fresh air and exercising the body is as healthy as it gets. Kids are on a tremendous growth curve of not just social and psychological development, but also on one of physical growth. As parents, we owe it to them to provide the best environment for optimal growth.

In the past decade, obesity has become a major medical problem in the field of pediatrics. Illnesses that we once saw only in adults are now sneaking up on children. Because of obesity, we are now seeing "adult onset" diabetes and hypertension. We are embarking on a major project in child health that involves not just what we do at home but goes beyond into the soccer field.

Calorie expenditure during exercise is dependent on the body weight of the child. An average 6 year old weighs about 45 pounds and spends about 36 kilocalories per 10 minutes of soccer. An average 12-year-old boy, by contrast, weighs an average of 90 pounds and spends about 72 kilocalories per 10 minutes of soccer. Assuming they play a whole AYSO game, the 6 year old will burn about 144 kilocalories whereas the 12 year old will burn 432 kilocalories.

I did a recent survey of products at our local grocery store and this is what I found: 1 Twinkie (150 kcal), 1 Hostess cupcake (200 Kcal), 1 Entenmann's doughnut (180 kcal), 1 Hostess Suzy-Q (230 kcal), 1 cereal nutigrain bar (140 Kcal), 1 Quaker chewy granola bar (120 Kcal), a 6-oz Capri sun (100 Kcal), and a 6-oz minute maid lemonade (100 kcal). You can imagine how the calories will add up with 2 snacks per game. Often children are taking in more calories from snacks than what they are burning!

Let me suggest some tips for snacks: keep the sugar load to a minimum at half-time so as to avoid that lull in the third quarter, and pick some healthier snacks for the end of the game snack. Some suggested foods: a medium size apple (about 84 kcals), a banana (about 108 kcals), an orange (about 64 kcals), a pear (120 kcals), a fruit yogurt (168 kcals). As you can see, it is hard to go wrong with the fruits. The AYSO board is encouraging healthy snacks during soccer games as part of children's healthy growth.

John Spitzer, Regional Safety Director