

Creating healthy bodies  
and healthy minds,  
one step at a time  
[www.schoolstriathlonchallenge.com](http://www.schoolstriathlonchallenge.com)



So the Schools Triathlon is not a race,  
but you can still eat well to make sure  
you perform at your best.

## Nutrition in Training: Fuelling the Junior Athlete

In the sports nutrition world we use the word "FUEL" as the term for food. This is because the foods we eat and the liquids we drink are our fuel, just like petrol is for a car. This is why it is important to choose the right type of "FUEL" for your body to get the most out of it, not only for the upcoming triathlon, but also in school and for everyday life!

As mentioned in the fridge magnet, choosing healthy food is important for everyone, but especially for young athletes participating in the Schools Triathlon Challenge! Your growth, development and sporting performance is affected by what you eat. If you eat too little food or choose too much junk food, you'll feel tired and will struggle with your sport. By making the right food choices the majority of the time, the healthy junior athlete will be able to play better, and for longer, whilst staying more mentally alert and also recover faster from training and competition.

### How much food is enough?

Although this will vary from child to child, below is a general guide for the minimum amounts of food for children aged 5 – 12 years. We all need to eat a balanced diet concentrating mainly on the 5 core food groups, with the occasional treat (extra) food allowed. The best "FUEL" that we can get from foods are from the 5 core food groups, so by choosing these most of the time you will feel better. This information is based on the current Australian Dietary Guidelines as mentioned in the fridge magnet.

To meet additional energy needs (FUEL) for a very active child, choose from the carbohydrate-rich food groups indicated with an \* as they will provide the extra 'go' these active children require. It is handy to know the recommended serving sizes and serves per day required so that you eat and drink the right amount of nutritious foods for your health. These are shown in the table overleaf.



## HEALTHY EATING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

FOOD GROUP:	RECOMMENDED DAILY SERVE:	SAMPLE SERVE SIZE:	
<b>Breads/Cereals/Pasta/Rice/Noodles</b>	4-7*	1x Slice of whole grain bread ½ cup of cooked rice/pasta/noodles ½ cup breakfast cereal (Porridge recipe) 2x Weetbix	
<b>Vegetables/Legumes</b>	5*	½ medium potato & sweet potato 1 cup of salad ½ cup tinned veg	½ cup cooked/frozen vegetables ½ cup baked beans
<b>Fruit</b>	1-2*	1 medium piece fruit 1 cup canned fruit	2 small fruit Handful of grapes
<b>Milk/Yoghurt/Cheese (Reduced fat)</b>	2-3	1 cup milk 200g yoghurt	2 slices cheese ½ cup custard
<b>Meats/Fish/Eggs/Nuts</b>	1	65-100g meat, chicken 2 eggs Handful of nuts	½ cup legumes 80-100g fish 1 small tin tuna
<b>Extra Foods</b>	1-2	2x plain biscuits 2 small scoops icecream Handful of lollies	Small slice of cake Small packet of potato chips Muesli bar

Source: Adapted from the Aus Dietary Guidelines and the Sports Dietitians Australia.

Extra foods (lollies, chocolate, icecream, potato chips etc) are not a good “FUEL” source for anyone, and especially for athletes. We can however choose these foods sometimes, however if you want to see an improvement in your performance, then limiting these to occasionally is ideal.

### How many serves a day

As a child you rarely eat exactly the same way every day, and it is common to some days eat a little more or less than others. However, on average, the total portion sizes should roughly end up being similar to the number of serves you need each day. The more active junior athlete may require a gradual increase in serve sizes, however this will depend as to if they are at their most healthiest weight range.

### Eating on the run

Kids who are continually ‘on the go’ require more “FUEL” to burn, need to eat regularly to keep topping up their energy levels. Nourishing carbohydrate foods should provide the bulk of extra energy required by these active children. Eating enough can be hard if they are too busy or too tired to eat regular meals. This is often the case in the evening, especially with daylight savings, so the afternoon tea snack becomes very important to top up your “FUEL” stores, especially after a hectic day of school and sport. The solution is to have a selection of healthy foods available fast!

Overleaf are some simple and quick snack options to have ready in the house, or in your lunchbox.

## Simple & Quick Snacks

- Pikelets/scones/fruit muffins
- Fat reduced dairy foods (yoghurt/milk/dairy desserts)
- Bread rolls/wraps/crumpets (wholemeal/multigrain are best)
- Fresh fruits, canned or dried
- Breakfast cereals
- Fruit and grain/muesli/cereal bars
- Unsalted nuts and dried fruits
- Baked beans/noodles/spaghetti/pasta snacks
- Cracker biscuits with low fat cheese
- Fresh fruits or raw vegetables
- Fruit smoothies/milkshakes
- Honey/jam/peanut butter/cheese sandwiches (wholemeal/multigrain bread is best)
- Fruit buns/fruit loaf
- Boiled potato/sweet corn cobs



## Which drink is best?

Water by far is the best choice for not only everyone, but also for the junior athlete. Our bodies are made up by roughly 60% water, therefore it is important that we replace this water which is lost as sweat by the active children. However, do not overlook the potential use and benefits of other fluids such as dairy, sports drinks and fruit juice. Dairy is a great choice as it provides a great source of micronutrients, such as calcium and sodium, and it contains a great low GI source of carbohydrate and protein for recovery after activity/training.

Water and sports drinks are the best choice just before, during and after sports, however this does all depend on how intense the activity is. Sports drinks will provide carbohydrate for energy and the small amount of electrolytes (sodium and potassium) in them will help to replace those lost during strenuous activity. During short bursts of low intensity activity, water is the best fluid for the junior athlete to drink. Dental hygiene is always important! To ensure your teeth are healthy do not excessively drink acidic fluids like soft drinks, sports drinks or cordial. Limit the use of these drinks to appropriate sporting situations as explained above.

During and after exercise, junior athletes will drink more if the fluid is flavoured and cooled, so provide a variety of drinks flavoured to your preference (within reason!). The best tip for young athletes is to drink frequently 'until you're not thirsty any more, and then have another few gulps'. The use of both water and flavoured fluids is likely to be the best way to keep you well hydrated particularly during prolonged activity. After activity, include water and steer clear of the high sugar, carbonated drinks (e.g. soft drinks). Fluids containing caffeine such as energy drinks are not suitable for children or the junior athlete.

## Incorporate this healthy eating into training!

To make sure you have enough of all the essential nutrients, encourage active children to eat a wide variety of nutritious foods.

- Fat reduced, high carbohydrate snacks are the best choice for active children.
- Ensure active children maintain a healthy body weight by balancing their energy intake with expenditure (physical activity)
- Encourage eating to your appetite which will vary from day to day.
- Take nutritious snacks to sporting events. Self-catering is wiser than relying on local canteens.
- Children can overheat and dehydrate quickly. Have plenty of fluids available before, during and after sport.