

Fundamental Nutrition Advice for Growing Gymnasts

Dear Members,

Below is a list of basic guidelines to help your growing children stay on top form.

Fluids

During training, water provides for optimum hydration. Tap water is free and has no calories or sugar.

After training water or ideally milk are great ways to re-hydrate a thirsty gymnast. Isotonic drinks are expensive and unnecessary. Milk provides a perfect balance of vitamins.

Children up to 4 years old should not be offered sugary/fizzy drinks. School age children should have sugary/fizzy drinks as a rare treat (one carton OR one can just once a week). Even good quality fruit juices or smoothies are high in sugar and the processing removes the healthy fibre that comes with the fruit. It is more beneficial to eat fruit rather than drink it.

The guidelines advise to keep in the limit of 150 ml of fruit juice a day if you choose to give your child juice.

Pre-Training

Gymnasts should have finished their breakfast/lunch or dinner one hour prior to training

Meals should include starchy carbohydrates and proteins. Children should include at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetable a day.

Some ideas:

Breakfast

- Porridge made with milk and fruit
- Eggs with toast & a cup of milk
- Shredded wheat or Weetabix with milk and fruit
- Wholemeal toast and milk
- Sausages, tomatoes & beans.

Lunch

- Scrambled eggs on toast, fresh tomatoes, a cup of milk
- Sandwich, vegetable sticks, fruit and yogurt
- Beans on toast with grated cheese on top, a cup of milk

Dinner

- All children should eat oily fish at least once a week for good brain function – salmon is excellent and highly recommended
- Stir fry –meat/fish with lots of veg and noodles
- Any roast dinner
- Tuna Pasta Bake
- Macaroni cheese plus a green veg (simply add frozen peas)

Snacks in-between training (squad gymnasts)

Very light foods only – this is not the time to have a full picnic! Ideal snacks are: tomatoes, any kind of berries, small salad, one piece of fruit, grapes, vegetarian salad, simple crackers;

Full sandwiches/pasta dishes are not recommended at this time. Avoid crisps, chocolate and processed meats (such as peperoni sausage).

Post Training Foods/Drinks

Carbohydrates to replenish muscles glycogen and provide energy (carbs can be found in all root vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, turnips etc in addition to rice, pasta, bread. The advantage of eating root vegetables is that you are also packing in vitamins/minerals whereas pasta/bread etc provide energy but not added nutrients)
Proteins for muscle repair (meat, fish, poultry, nuts (strictly no nuts allowed in the gym)
Fruit/veg to hydrate and provide vitamins and minerals essential
Some more ideas:

- ❖ Low sugar cereal with milk and fruit
- ❖ Peanut butter sandwich + banana
- ❖ Crackers and cheese + fruit
- ❖ Chicken and avocado sandwich
- ❖ Natural Greek yogurt with fruit

Advice on Desserts & Sweets

Having something sweet is one of the joys in life and we are realistic here. It is not having sweet foods that is the problem – it's the **TIMING & QUANTITIES** of these.

Please do not have sweet food in-between meals – opt for a piece of fruit/raw veg/ savoury snack – cheese & crackers or yoghurt

Fruit jelly is an excellent choice for dessert (once or twice a week if training regularly)
Yoghurt, ice cream & home baking are excellent choices for dessert.

NHS guidelines on sugar:

Adults: less than 30g a day of free sugar (roughly equivalent to 7 cubes)

Children aged 7 to 10: less than 24g a day of free sugar (roughly equivalent to 6 cubes)

Children aged 4 to 6: less than 19g a day of free sugar (roughly equivalent to 5 cubes)

Children 0 to 4: the recommendations are to **avoid** added sugar in food and drinks.

Free sugar: any sugars added to food or drinks. These include sugars in biscuits, chocolate, flavoured yoghurts, breakfast cereals and fizzy drinks. These sugars may be added at home, or by a chef or other food manufacturer. Sugars in honey, syrups (such as maple, agave and golden), nectars (such as blossom), and unsweetened fruit juices, vegetable juices and smoothies. The sugars in these foods occur naturally but still count as free sugars.

Sugar found naturally in milk, fruit and vegetables does not count as free sugars.

Check the labels ☺

The best time to have a chocolate biscuit, pudding or sweet treat is **AFTER** a main meal.

Any further questions/queries get in touch: laura@cheshiregymnastics.com

Useful websites:

School age children and adults should base their diet to the Eatwell guide:

<https://www.nutrition.org.uk/healthyliving/healthydiet/eatwell.html>

To check your child BMI:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/>

Diet, Behaviour and Learning in children:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/DietBehaviourLearningChildren.pdf>

Healthy eating for Children:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/healthyeatingchildren.pdf>