



Youth Athletics and Energy Drinks

A football game lasts for 48 to 60 minutes with most plays requiring quick bursts of high-intensity effort. Some athletes often look for a quick boost to gain an edge and are turning to caffeinated energy drinks (ED's) to provide that burst prior to practices and games.

This can be a dangerous approach. Some youth player's often experience mistakes, an increased heart rate, increased blood pressure and a disrupted sleep cycle as their bodies can't handle the elevated levels of caffeine. Many have difficulty seeing the warning signs or get so amped up, that they can't focus on the lesson or game.

The NYFL strongly discourages the use of caffeinated energy drinks and advises parents that they are not giving their kids any advantage. Drinking ED's at such a young age can pose a threat to a child's health and the jitters it produces are more of a detriment to the player than anything they would get out of it. It is also recommended that if players show signs of being over-caffeinated that they are immediately removed from games or practices. Some of those signs are similar to concussion symptoms – including inability to concentrate and nausea.

Proper pre-game nutrition can provide you with the energy you need to take on the challenges of game day. Knowing what, how much and when you should eat can give you an edge during competition.

Carbohydrates

Your energy levels are more likely to stay high during competition if you follow a high-carbohydrate diet during the season. Carbohydrates are the most important nutrient you can consume to provide energy. Common carbohydrate foods include pasta, potatoes, cereals and bagels. Electrolyte replacement sports drinks and specially designed energy bars are other sources of carbohydrates.

Digestion and Timing

For maximum game-time energy, most food should be out of your stomach, broken down and absorbed by the start of the game. It is suggested that you eat your last full meal at least two and half to three hours prior to exercise for it to be properly digested. The closer you are to game time you should aim for having a snack one hour before play.

Foods to Avoid

Foods high in proteins and fats are hard for your body to digest. Instead of making you feel energized, they can make you sluggish. Skip steak, sausage, ice cream, mayonnaise-based salad and cheese prior to a game. Also, avoid low-carb, low-calorie foods like diet drinks and green salads, which will not provide you with enough calories or carbs for energy.

Drinks

Specially designed electrolyte replacement drinks can be a good source of carbohydrates, but be wary of ones that claim to provide you with extra energy. These can derail your focus, causing you to crash and burn during competition. Chocolate milk is a great catch-all workout recovery drink. Compared to plain milk, water, or most sports drinks, it has double the carbohydrate and protein content, perfect for replenishing tired muscles.