



NUTRITION AND HYDRATION

Lesson 9: Fuel for Performance

Choosing the right foods at the right time can ensure that athletes have optimal energy to exercise, and to recover well from their practice or competition. In this lesson, athletes and parents/caregivers work together to debunk common myths about sports nutrition.

Consider inviting caregivers to participate in this lesson.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Athletes learn how to fuel their bodies for sports practice and competition.
- Coaches and caregivers support athletes to properly fuel for sports practice and competitions.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Mythbuster questions

LESSON OUTLINE

20 MINUTES TOTAL	DESCRIPTION
3 minutes	Welcome and Gather
11 minutes	Sports Nutrition Mythbusters
3 minutes	Athlete Question of the Day
3 minutes	Closing



WELCOME AND GATHER (3 minutes)

Greet athletes as they arrive. Invite athletes to walk and talk with a partner about their favorite snacks. *What is your favorite healthy snack? What meal/snack did you eat before practice today?*

To begin the lesson, call everyone in with your designated signal.

Once athletes are gathered, introduce the Fitness through Sport lesson of the day. *Today's lesson is called Fuel for Performance! Choosing the right foods at the right time can ensure that you have optimal energy to exercise, and to recover efficiently from practice or competition.*



SPORTS NUTRITION MYTHBUSTERS (11 minutes)

Purpose: Debunk common myths about sports nutrition and learn simple ways to fuel for sports practices and competitions.

Directions:

- Split the group into 2-4 equal teams and ask them to sit together. Athlete and caregiver pairs should stay together.
- Encourage teams to come up with a team name and team cheer.
- Read a myth and ask teams to discuss in their groups what they think the correct answer is and why. After a minute of discussion, invite a team to share their answer.
- Lead a team cheer for the teams who share an answer.
- Repeat until all myths are solved or time is up!

QUESTION	ANSWER	RATIONALE
<p>True or False: On competition days, athletes should skip breakfast and exercise on an empty stomach.</p>	False	Food gives you the energy you need to workout! Athletes should not skip breakfast and should avoid working out on an empty stomach. If rushed, you can have a very small snack consisting of mostly carbohydrates within an hour before training or competition. A piece of fruit paired with a second type of carbohydrate, like crackers, is a great example!
<p>True or False: You can become dehydrated in cold weather or water sports, even though you may not be sweating or thirsty.</p>	True	<p>In colder climates, the body's thirst signals are often delayed. This is especially true for sports at higher altitudes, like alpine skiing and snowboarding, because of increased breathing rates that are experienced at higher elevations.</p> <p>While thirst signals can be unreliable in these climates, athletes will still be losing water through sweating and open mouth breathing. It's also important to remember that wearing cold weather and waterproof gear, like gloves and snow jacket, may cause athletes to sweat more despite the low temperature.</p> <p>The best way to avoid dehydration is to arrive to practices and competitions hydrated, have frequent water breaks during practice, and drink water to rehydrate after practice.</p>
<p>True or False: Most athletes should drink a sports drink (ex: Powerade) during practice.</p>	False	<p>For most Special Olympics athletes, drinking water is sufficient for keeping their bodies hydrated and functioning at the highest level.</p> <p>A sports drink could be considered for high intensity or long endurance exercise that lasts longer than one hour. For example, sports like distance running, triathlon, high performance soccer or football may warrant an isotonic sports drink.</p> <p>Athletes who require sports drinks should consume them only during or immediately after a workout or competition lasting over an hour. Sports drinks typically contain high amounts of sugar, which can be challenging for some people to digest and lead to stomach discomfort. If an athlete does need a sports drink, encourage low and/or zero sugar options.</p>

QUESTION	ANSWER	RATIONALE
<p>True or False: Athletes should refuel within one hour after their workout ends.</p>	<p>True</p>	<p>The initial post-exercise recovery should occur within one hour of the practice or competition ending. This timing is important as it helps to refill the storage of energy in your body and aids in the immediate repair of muscles. Because of this, an athlete's post-exercise snack should include both carbohydrates and protein.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-sugar protein bar • Greek yogurt and fruit smoothie • Chocolate milk <p>2-3 hours after exercise, athletes should aim to eat a well-balanced meal with carbohydrates, protein and fats, and continue to rehydrate with water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omelet with whole wheat toast • Your choice of protein with vegetables and rice • Whole grain pita with protein and vegetables



ATHLETE QUESTION OF THE DAY (3 minutes)

What is one thing you learned today about nutrition?

- Remind athletes of the myths and note what stood out to them.
- Remind athletes to add any new goals to their Weekly Habit Tracker



CLOSING (3 minutes)

Thank the athletes for their participation and effort. **Share a nutrition tip that has worked for you based on one of the myths.** *I used to drink a sports drink before and during practice, but once I replaced it with water, I realized it did not affect my workouts and it saved me a lot of extra money and time.*

Reminders:

- [Homeplay: Snack Tracker](#) — *In this week's Homeplay activity, you will be looking at your snack timing and types of food to see if there are some small changes you could make to be your best during workouts.*
- Share feedback and praise for effort and healthy habits you observed.

Coach Reflection:

- What worked?
- What did not work? What can be done differently?

SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- [Homeplay: Snack Tracker](#)
- [School of Strength: Snack Zone](#)
- [Fit 5 Guide](#)