

# Sports snacks: Food for thought

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*Guest columnist*

Has your kid's sport team passed around the sign-up sheet yet for parents to bring the communal snack on game days? Typically post-game snacks have been the norm. The game ends and the designated "snack parent" produces a "ginormous" variety of over-processed snack foods and drink boxes.

Times are a-changing. There is a national trend of communities giving up the practice of junk food snacks at extracurricular sport activities in an attempt to be healthier. With unprecedented rates of childhood obesity and obesity-related diseases on the rise in our nation, it makes good sense to seriously look at what we're giving our children to eat, and what kind of example we are showing them.

For some reason, many of our children's sport events have evolved into a "will play for food" mentality. We often forget the real reward. The events revolve around food and treats rather than the reward of giving your best and getting exercise while being outside with friends. This sends a mixed message to our youngsters: play sports (to have fun and stay healthy), but be rewarded with junk food (and undo the positive effect of what you've just done). The average 5- to 9-year-old child doesn't burn enough calories in a soccer game to work off the chips, chocolate covered granola bar, and "juice" drink.



**REAL FOOD, REAL LIFE**



At some point, most teams eventually phase out the post-game snack, usually when the parents make a joint decision (for whatever reason) that it's time. Maybe they realize the kids are in it for the sport and not the treat. Or perhaps they simply don't want to feed their kids sugar and fat-loaded junk food after a game.

This isn't about ruining anyone's fun or being the food police. The fun should be playing sports. And don't we all want our children to be healthy?

What's a soccer mom or dad to do? Take an opinion poll (parents

## Healthy Snack Ideas

- Water
- Strawberries
- Bananas
- Orange slices
- Apple slices
- Grapes
- Pretzels
- Popcorn
- Whole grain bagels with low-fat cream cheese
- String cheese
- Low-fat yogurt

only, please). Do we, as a team, want to do post-game snacks? If not, then don't. For those who are not ready to end the post-game treat tradition, talk to your team parents about healthier options. A word from experience, be specific about what "healthy" means because everyone has their own version of what constitutes a healthy snack.

Keep in mind this rule of thumb: the closer the food resembles its original state as it

comes from the earth, the more nutrients it will likely offer. And those nutrients help performance both on and off the field.