

6 HEALTHY FOODS THAT FOOL YOUNG SWIMMERS

BY JILL CASTLE, MS, RDN (7/21/2015)

Jake was drinking a sports drink at lunch. Shelley ate 5 or 6 handfuls of nuts for her after-school snack. Graham guzzled OJ in the morning.

What do these young swimmers have in common? They all thought they were healthy eaters.

Being a healthy eater means knowing which foods promote health and how much to eat. Some foods have the appearance of being healthy, but when you look at the ingredients and analyze their nutrition, they fall into the unhealthy zone. Other foods may be truly healthy items, but eating large amounts pushes them to the unhealthy side.

Many consumers are fooled by the food they eat. These 6 foods may be fooling your young swimmer, and here's why:

Yogurt. Yogurt certainly has a variety of health benefits, but being the vehicle for added sugar is not one of them. Yogurt with candy stir-ins (located on the top or side of the package) isn't the best bet when it comes to choosing a health-enhancing food. Those types of yogurt are the highest in sugar content. Instead, look for yogurt, either regular or Greek, that is plain or flavored, as these will have less added sugar. Yogurt with fruit on the bottom or blended into the yogurt is your next best bet.

Granola Bars. The lure of oats, honey, nuts and seeds is tempting because the promise of health seems to radiate from them. When they're in isolation, yes, these ingredients are healthy, but packaged together and dipped in chocolate (or vanilla, peanut or other creamy, sugary coating), they aren't. If you take a moment to scan the nutrition facts panel, you'll find the percentage of fat and

sugar can be off the charts! Be careful with these products— some granola bars resemble candy when their nutritional parameters are analyzed. If you can't resist granola bars, you can always make your own or keep a cap on the fat, sugar and calories by limiting them to less than 5 grams per serving, less than 10 grams per serving and less than 180 calories per serving, respectively, in the packaged versions.

Cereal. Swimmers can go either way with cereal, which is another category of food that ranges from the uber healthy (high fiber, low sugar and low fat) to the surprisingly unhealthy (sugar-, fat-, and artificial color-filled). The good news about cereal is that it is often fortified with nutrients the young athlete can use more of, such as calcium, vitamin D, vitamin C, folate and fiber. The bad news: if cereal is loaded with unhealthy ingredients, its benefit to athletic performance and health is questionable. Use these guidelines when purchasing cereal: keep sugar content less than 10 grams per serving (under 5 grams is even better), fiber content more than 3 gram per serving, and avoid artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives.

Sports Drinks. A sports drink can be a lifesaver for the swimmer, especially during those long, intensive workouts. Not only do they help prevent dehydration, they can be a source of energy for the swimmer. But, when misused, such as a routine drink with meals or consumed when not exercising, sports drinks can pose a threat to the young swimmers health. One 2014 study published in Obesity found that a serving of sports drink a day was more detrimental to kids' weight than the same amount of soda daily.

100% Fruit Juice. Yes, it's a natural food. Yes, it counts as a fruit. And, yes it's full of vitamin C. But, when consumed in large volumes (more than 8-12 ounces per day), 100% fruit juice may contribute too much sugar to an athlete's diet.

Nuts. (Small)Nuts. Full of fiber, fat and protein, as well as nutrients, such as omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin E that help the brain and heart, nuts have long been touted as a health food. And they are healthy! However, because they

provide a concentrated source of fat, nuts can level a powerful calorie punch. An ounce of nuts (roughly 23 almonds; 18 cashews; 35 peanuts; or 14 walnut halves) offers between 160-200 calories. If the young swimmer is tossing handfuls into his mouth, he may be getting too many calories.

Don't be fooled by food—knowing what and how much the young swimmer should be eating will keep food as a friend, not a foe.

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