



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

HEALTHY SPORTS SNACK TOOLKIT NC ALLIANCE OF YMCAS

In May 2014, the CEOs of the 27 YMCA Associations in North Carolina, with numerous other organizations statewide, endorsed the following youth sports nutrition position statement put forth by the NC Alliance of YMCAs and the Statewide Pioneering Healthier Communities task force:

It is the position of [insert YMCA Association] that youth and adolescents participating in sports shall have access to healthy foods and beverages as part of pre-game, mid-game, and post-game meals and snacks, particularly when those foods and beverages are provided by the sponsoring organization or school. Healthy shall be defined as foods and beverages that align with the nutrition standards outlined in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's Competitive Foods Guidelines for K-12 Schools and School Beverage Guidelines.

The NC Alliance of YMCAs created this toolkit to assist YMCAs in implementing the above position statement in youth sports programs. The goal is to provide resources that will develop positive and sustainable culture change throughout YMCAs across the state.

All of the resources are endorsed by the NC Alliance of YMCAs and are created for all NC YMCA Associations to use. The needs of associations vary across the state, and YMCA employees are encouraged to use the resources included in this toolkit that best address the association's needs. The resources included in this toolkit may be modified, edited, or adapted to fit the needs of the YMCA Association or branch, as long as they fall within the guidelines mentioned in the position statement above.

USING THIS TOOLKIT IS SIMPLE AND EASY:

STAND

Take a stance on healthy sports snacking.

SELECT

Choose and use the resources that are most helpful for you. Adapt if needed.

SCORE

Help your athletes score more by encouraging healthy sports snacking!

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**USING THIS
TOOLKIT IS SIMPLE
AND EASY:**

STAND

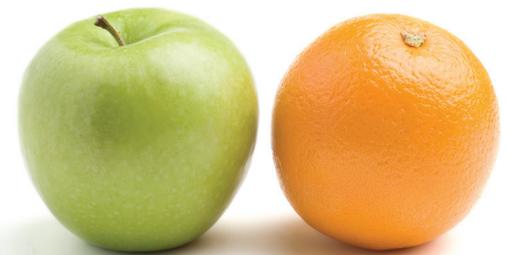
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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, North Carolina was ranked 18th in the nation for childhood obesity, with a rate of 16.1% for children ages 10 to 17. In addition, one-third of North Carolina youth are overweight or obese. North Carolina youth only eat two of the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day. Furthermore, only 29% of youth engage in adequate physical activity on a daily basis.

The 27 North Carolina YMCA Associations are the largest providers of childcare and after school programs in the state; more than 350,000 youth are enrolled in youth programs at NC YMCAs, including youth sports programs.

WHY THE Y?

The YMCA stands for healthy living, youth development, and social responsibility. Youth sports nutrition successfully bridges the gap between healthy living and youth development. While the health benefits from physical activity through sport and athletics are widely accepted, the importance of sound nutrition practices for sport and athletic success is often overlooked and seldom promoted. Organizations that provide, sponsor and support youth sports and athletics should be committed to promoting practices that are based on sound evidence and consider the best interest of the youth participant.

The YMCA should aim to provide access to healthy foods and beverages in all aspects of the youth sport and athletics experience including before, during and after practices and games, at concessions and through fundraising efforts. Such commitment and practice provides a clear message that a healthy diet is consistent with good health and optimal athletic performance.

The purpose of this toolkit is to assist in the implementation of healthy sports snack practices for YMCA associations across the state of North Carolina. As a leading provider of youth programming, YMCA's have a responsibility to lead the way in improving the health of the youth in North Carolina communities.

**NORTH CAROLINA
RANKED
18TH** 
**IN THE NATION FOR
CHILDHOOD OBESITY**

**MORE THAN
350,000
YOUTH ARE ENROLLED
IN YOUTH
PROGRAMS
AT NC YMCAS**



¹Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2014). The State of Obesity. Retrieved from <http://stateofobesity.org/states/nc/>.

²Prevalence of Cardiovascular Disease Risk Factors Among US Adolescents 1999-2008. Ashleigh L. May, Elena V. Kuklin and Paul W. Yoon Pediatrics; originally published online May 21, 2012.

³NC State Center for Health Statistics. (2011). 2011 Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program data. Retrieved from <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/topics.html#n>

⁴NC State Center for Health Statistics. (2011). 2011 Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program data. Retrieved from <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/topics.html#n>

MODEL PRACTICE POLICY LANGUAGE

The [insert YMCA Association/branch] Healthy Sports Snack Practice (or Policy) (“Practice” or “Policy”) sets forth the procedures regarding healthy sports snacking within YMCA youth sports programs. The goal of this Practice(Policy) is to create an environment that encourages youth sports participants and their families to lead healthy, active lifestyles.

This Practice/Policy applies to all individuals involved in youth sports through an association’s youth sports program, including the director, coaches, participants, and family members of participants. These guidelines are meant to aid YMCA programs in leading healthy eating and living efforts as it parallels the YMCA’s Mission and Cause.



FRUIT, VEGETABLE, AND WATER. Any snacks, whether supplied by a coach or any individual associated with a youth sports team, must be either a fruit or a vegetable. The only beverage allowed is water.

Strongly recommended (or required) snack options:

- Orange and apple wedges
- Fresh peaches, pears, watermelon, or any seasonal fruit
- Dried fruit and raisins
- Bananas, grapes, and strawberries
- Fruit cups (packed in 100% juice)
- Unsweetened applesauce
- Carrots, celery, or cucumbers

OR

NO SNACKS. No snacks of any kind are allowed at YMCA-sanctioned youth sporting events.

Pick one of these positions and drop the Practice/Policy language into your Policy and Procedures manual.

PROCEDURES

All youth sports directors should:

- make clear the stance taken by the youth sports program as a whole;
- empower and encourage volunteer coaches to endorse and support the policy;
- deliver necessary educational materials and/or guidelines to coaches and parents;
- provide resources and guidelines in public spaces (website, front desk, etc.).

LANGUAGE FOR EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

In order to continue our commitments to healthy living and youth development, the [insert YMCA Association/branch] abides by a Healthy Sports Snack Practice/Policy with regards to all youth sports teams and events. The Practice/Policy states [choose: that any team sports snacks provided at a youth sports game or event must be a fruit or vegetable and water only OR no team sports snacks of any kind are to be provided at youth sports games and events.] Staff members model the YMCA's healthy eating standards for athletics by consuming fruits, vegetables, and water during sports snack times. Both physical [body language, active role modeling, etc.] and verbal [spoken instructions, word of encouragement, etc.] cues should be used to guide healthy eating and physical activity practices. If you feel you need an accommodation or more information, please speak with your supervisor.

**Take and drop into
your Employee
Handbook and/or
Job Descriptions.**

LANGUAGE FOR JOB DESCRIPTION

FOR SPORTS DIRECTORS

- To uphold the YMCA's commitments to healthy living and youth development, Sports Directors will oversee the implementation and communication of a Healthy Sports Snack Practice/Policy to create athletic environments where healthy eating is encouraged.

FOR VOLUNTEER COACHES

- To uphold the YMCA's commitments to healthy living and youth development, volunteer youth sports coaches will join the Sports Director in creating athletic environments where healthy eating is encouraged and will abide by the Healthy Sports Snack Practice/Policy.



TRAINING MATERIALS FOR COACHES MEETINGS

START WITH Y

GOAL: to emphasize that healthy snacking for youth sports aligns with the YMCA's mission, cause, and focus areas.

Explain why your association has chosen to take a stand with youth sports and healthy eating and how it bridges healthy living and youth development. Highlight that the YMCA wants to create an environment where young athletes can learn the skills to lead healthy lifestyles.

Discussion: What are the three focus areas of the YMCA? Under which area does youth sports nutrition fall? What is the YMCA's mission statement? What parts of the mission statement incorporate healthy eating?

BRAINSTORM HEALTHY HABITS

GOAL: to identify potential ways coaches can create structured time to encourage healthy eating.

Ask coaches to brainstorm ways they can encourage healthy eating for athletes; coaches do not have to be a nutritionist or dietitian to do so. For example, encourage water breaks during practices with water coolers, or use the team gathering time at the end of a game to discuss a character trait AND healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Choose any number of these discussion topics to help coaches understand the importance of healthy sports snacking.

HIGHLIGHT MATERIALS

GOAL: to explain how the resources included in this toolkit can be best used.

Review the necessary resources, emphasizing materials that are of the most use to the coaches but may be overlooked (ie. Talking with Parents, Sample Parent Letters, Social Media resources).

PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

GOAL: to engage the coaches in conversation regarding motivating parents to bring healthy foods and beverages.

Facilitate discussion on how to champion these practices with parents of participants.

Discussion: What is your initial perspective about healthy sports snacking practices? What resources or conversations would be most helpful for you, as a parent, to adhere to these practices? How can we establish a unified approach to healthy snacking across our league?

TALKING WITH PARENTS

APPROACHING PARENTS

The following conversation models how to politely speak with a parent whose team snack falls outside the YMCA's healthy snack guidelines.

"Hey Mr. Smith, thank you so much for bringing snack today. I wanted to remind you that our youth sports program asks that all team snacks be fruits, vegetables, and water. I really appreciate your thoughtful gesture, but we'll hold off on providing that snack today."



TALKING POINTS

- **EMPTY CALORIES.** Children under the age of 13 are allotted roughly 140 "empty calories" a day, meaning those calories provide no nutritional value whatsoever. If a child were to have one soft drink or juice pouch and a small bag of chips, he or she could easily meet or exceed that 140 empty calorie recommendation and get very little nutrition in return.
- **IMPROVE NUTRITION.** This is a great opportunity for kids to increase their nutritional intake. Most NC children only consume 2 of the recommended 5 fruits or vegetables a day.
- **IT'S OUR GOAL.** It is the Y's goal to provide an environment that encourages participants to lead healthy lifestyles.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- **COMMUNICATE EARLY.** Communicating healthy sports snacking practices at the beginning of the season and at the beginning of team gatherings, and continuing to remind parents of those practices, will be most helpful in ensuring that parents are on board with healthy sports snacking.
- **BE GRATEFUL.** Acknowledge the parent's kind gesture and willingness to provide. Be kind and patient.
- **LISTEN.** Show a willingness to listen if the parent provides pushback.
- **SMILE.** Approach parents with a smile and a gracious attitude.

⁵ ChooseMyPlate.gov and the United States Department of Agriculture. (n.d.) "Empty Calories." Retrieved from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/weight-management-calories/calories/empty-calories-amount.html>

⁶ NC State Center for Health Statistics. (2011). 2011 Child Health Assessment and Monitoring Program data. Retrieved from <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/schs/champ/2011/topics.html#n>

PARENT SURVEY QUESTIONS



Did the YMCA help your family reach its health and wellness goals?

- Yes
- No

Did the YMCA help your child consume more fruits and vegetables than he/she would normally?

- Yes
- No
- Already consuming the recommend number of fruits and vegetables (5)

Did the YMCA help your child decrease the number of sugar sweetened drinks he/she consumes?

- Yes
- No
- Already consuming zero (0) sweetened drinks

Did the YMCA spark conversation between you and your child about healthy eating and athletic performance?

- Yes
- No
- Already having regular conversation about healthy eating

Did you find purchasing fruits, vegetables, and water was cost effective?

- Yes
- No

Were healthy eating and snacking discussed during team gatherings following YMCA-sanctioned practices and games?

- Yes
- No

Did you find that community building during YMCA-sanctioned team gatherings following practices and games was compromised as a result of not having snacks?

- Yes
- No

Would you rather not have snack than have to provide a healthy snack (fruit/vegetable/water)?

- Yes
- No

Is your family more likely to adopt new healthier behaviors as a result of participating in YMCA youth sports?

- Yes
- No

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

(FRUIT/VEGETABLE/WATER ONLY)

Dear Parents,

We are thrilled your child is a part of our [insert youth sports program/season]! It is a privilege for us to be a part of your child's athletic experiences, and we hope this season is an opportunity for your child to grow and develop a healthy and active lifestyle.

We are excited to announce that, beginning this season, we have taken the pressure off of deciding what snack to bring for your child's YMCA sports practices and games! As a part of the YMCA's commitment to healthy living and youth development, [insert YMCA Association/branch] asks that any snack provided must be a fruit or vegetable, and any beverage provided be water.

Not only do we want our young athletes to have the fuel to compete well, but we also believe healthy sports snacks will help make the healthy choice the coolest choice! Below is a list of healthy snacking options we encourage you to bring if you bring snack:

- Orange and apple wedges
- Fresh peaches, pears, watermelon, or any seasonal fruit
- Dried fruit and raisins
- Bananas, grapes, and strawberries
- Fruit cups (packed in juice)
- Unsweetened applesauce
- Carrots, celery, or cucumbers

It is our goal this season that your child will SCORE more: Strengthen his/her body by making good decisions, Choose water, Open conversations about healthy habits, Refuel with fruits and vegetables, and Encourage others to do the same.

We are asking that parents get involved and support this initiative by signing the pledge below. Eating healthy is a huge part of building strong athletes! We want you on our team.

Sincerely,

Youth Sports Program Director

.....
I, _____, pledge that I will help my child, _____, SCORE more with healthy sports snack practices.

I will help my young athlete:

- Strengthen his/her body by making good decisions
- Choose water
- Open conversation about healthy habits
- Refuel with fruits and vegetables
- Encourage others to do the same and excel in YMCA youth sports!

Name _____ Date _____

SAMPLE PARENT LETTER

(NO SNACK)

Dear Parents,

We are thrilled your child is a part of our [insert youth sports program/season]! It is a privilege for us to be a part of your child's athletic experiences, and we hope this season is an opportunity for your child to grow and develop a healthy and active lifestyle.

We are excited to announce that, beginning this season, we have taken the pressure off of bringing snacks for your child's YMCA sports practices and games! As a part of the YMCA's commitment to healthy living and youth development, [insert YMCA Association/branch] has asked parents to refrain from bringing snacks to any youth sports event, game, or practice.

We have found that team snacks leave open the possibility of your young athletes consuming foods and drinks that are high in calories with little nutritional benefit. In it is the interest of your athlete's health that we have adopted these practices, as we do not want his/her physical activity to be compromised because of unhealthy snacks and drinks during and following sports practices and games.

It is our goal this season that your child will SCORE more: Strengthen his/her body by making good decisions, Choose water, Open conversations about healthy habits, Refuel with fruits and vegetables, and Encourage others to do the same.

We hope you will take this as a gift and enjoy the friendly, healthy environment through YMCA youth sports. We are asking that parents get involved and support this initiative by signing the pledge below. We want you on our team!

Sincerely,

Youth Sports Program Director

.....

I, _____, pledge that I will help my child, _____, SCORE more with healthy sports snack practices.

I will help my young athlete:

- **Strengthen his/her body by making good decisions**
- **Choose water**
- **Open conversation about healthy habits**
- **Refuel with fruits and vegetables**
- **Encourage others to do the same and excel in YMCA youth sports!**

Name _____ Date _____