

Responding to Snack Challenges

The attitudes parents have regarding healthy snacks at community sport events are going to be diverse. Some parents may not be supportive of the healthy snacking guidelines set out in this playbook. Here are some responses to help you with challenges to healthy snacks.

Challenge	Suggested Response
We should be able to provide children with food to celebrate the game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all love to celebrate games well played; however, we have to remember our goal is to have fun playing the sport. If parents and children want food following a game, encourage them to make it healthy food. • Let's not assume that children won't enjoy healthy foods. • Often it's the celebration instead of the food that is important to the children. • There are fun non-food rewards that can be used as incentives – certificates, stickers, and team weekly trophy are ideas that may work.
It's just one snack, what's the big deal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats are no longer offered on an occasional basis or special event; instead, they are the norm. • We need to remember that a little praise and individual attention will go a long way toward making a child feel good.
They already eat these foods at home and bring them to school in their lunches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes they do. This makes it even more important to limit these foods and beverages at practices and games. • Since we are providing snacks on a regular basis, we should provide healthy choices that reinforce the nutrition lessons that children learn in school. • We have the opportunity to promote and role model healthy eating behaviour that contributes to good health throughout life.
Kids have the right to choose whatever they want.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would like to give children as much choice as possible. However, we try to guide children in making good decisions that will promote good health. For example, if you give children a choice to wear a helmet or not when riding a bicycle, what do you think they might choose? Likely, they will opt not to wear the helmet, not realizing their increased risk for head injuries. Supporting healthy eating is no different. • Making healthy food more available and convenient teaches good habits at an early age and may decrease their risk of long-term health problems.
Food and what the kids are eating is not the team's problem - it's the parents' responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snacking is not about one child, but rather it is about the entire food culture of the team. Just like we don't want them fighting in the game or yelling profanities, we are looking to promote a healthy approach to sport. • It's about parents and coaches working together. • Yes, parents and caregivers do have a responsibility to provide healthy foods and we can help them to learn tips and ways to do that. But when children spend time at community sporting events, it is the ideal setting to teach and promote lifelong healthy eating behaviours. • It helps parents if teams provide opportunities to practice healthy eating. It can reinforce positive messages about nutrition and healthy eating. If the team does not provide healthy foods, we make it hard for children to practice healthy eating.

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Healthy food is more expensive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of implementing this healthy snacking plan is deciding how much money should be spent on team snacks. We have agreed that no more than _____ will be spent on snacks.• Healthy options can be less expensive. For example, one watermelon is often cheaper than popsicles. We can check out the flyers for deals.
I just don't have the time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many fruits only require a wash! Consider buying a bag of apples, pears, or oranges. These fruit require no at-home preparation time. A gentle wash under water is all that is needed to have these snacks ready for the game.• Spend a little more time planning to save time later. Mark your snack day on the calendar and incorporate the snacks into your weekly shopping list. Make one big trip to the grocery store.• Delegate the workload. Involve children in the snack planning and preparation. They will be delighted to help!• Consider the pre-cut fruit and vegetable trays. They can be found in many grocery stores.
Parents should not be told what to bring for snack options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• As a coach, I have made a commitment to teaching children the discipline of the sport, how to treat their teammates, and live a healthy lifestyle.• Healthy snacking is part of that. This isn't about enforcing or policing the foods children eat but, but rather, providing support and education around making healthy choices. When we make guidelines about the types of food available at the game, we achieve consistency between the lessons taught in the curriculum at school and the messages we give on the playing field. For example, giving parents ideas about the preferred choices to send helps children to apply the healthy eating behaviours they have learned. We are encouraging parents to support a healthy food culture by sending healthy food choices.

