



# CROSS COUNTRY YOUTH TEAM

## PARENT'S GUIDE

### Top Things A Parent Can Do For Their Cross Country Runner

We're excited to have your family join us for the upcoming cross country season! There's a lot to look forward to, but before we begin, here are a few tips to help you and your runner have a positive cross country season experience.

#### Encourage Communication

Encourage your runner to communicate with their coach about any questions they may have regarding training, competitions, injuries, recovery, etc. We strive to empower each team member with the ability to openly and confidently communicate with his or her coach. If a solution cannot be found between the runner and coach, we then recommend a parent join the discussion.

#### Report Aches and Pains to Your Coach

Check in with your runner and urge them to let the coaches know if they are experiencing aches and pains. They can help runners decide what is normal and what needs attention. This is an important step to prevent injuries and reduce the "pain and suffering" of distance running.

#### Encourage Hydration

Most kids who participate in sports do not stay adequately hydrated throughout their competition season. Make sure your runner brings a water bottle to school and drinks throughout the day, especially during lunch. It takes weeks to become fully hydrated. Headaches, abdominal cramps, muscle cramps/twitches, and fatigue can be prevented by being hydrated.

#### Add Electrolytes

In addition to drinking plenty of water, your runner will need to consume beverages that include electrolytes to stay properly hydrated. Coconut water and Powerade are good options to choose from. Do not reduce salts as they enable nerve impulses to fire, and a lack of them can trigger cramping. Learn more about hydration best practices in the nutrition section of this document.

#### Encourage Adequate Sleep

Encourage your child to get to bed as early as they can. Getting adequate sleep is challenging for many students, but sleep is key to optimum performance on the course and in school.

#### Stretch, Stretch, Stretch

Have your runner stretch, and then stretch some more. The Big 5 Stretches (listed on page 5) are great for improving recovery and flexibility within the major muscle groups.

#### Use a Foam Roller

Move the coffee table and let your runner use a "stick" or foam roller to help actively recover sore and tired muscles. Learn more about foam rolling techniques by watching this video: [bit.ly/20TkDRj](https://bit.ly/20TkDRj)

#### Use Epsom Salts

Have your runner use Epsom salts in a hot, soaking bath to relax and calm muscles. Magnesium is absorbed through the skin, and having some Epsom salts even on the floor of the shower will help. Add a cup full to their bath or shower.

#### Add Protein

Muscle recovery requires protein. Aim to have your runner to eat/drink 15-20 grams of protein within 15 minutes of finishing practice to maximize its benefit. Urge your runner to keep protein bars in their bag to eat right after practice or have them try Core Power or a protein drink if they need a change from bars. Chocolate milk is a great recovery drink and is offered frequently after practice during the season. Follow practice with a healthy, well-balance meal and another protein-based snack before bedtime.





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### Make School Lunch Healthy

Your runner's school lunch should include protein and complex carbs. Check in with your runner and make sure they are eating well-rounded meals at school.

### Iron, Vitamins, and Calcium

Speak to your pediatrician about your runner taking an iron supplement, a multivitamin, or a calcium supplement. Some teen endurance athletes have an increased need for iron, vitamins, and minerals in addition to what they get from a well-balanced, nutrient-rich diet.

### Wear the Right Shoes

Be ready to buy new shoes for your runner. Make sure that the cushioning and support in their shoes are in good shape. Check the bottoms for wear. We recommend visiting your local specialty running store and speaking with an employee to learn more about what running shoes would be best for your child.

### Add Some Cross training

Have your runner cross train when they can. Play some soccer or basketball every once in a while. A strong core and strong arms are essential to proper running form and can make running easier.

### Dress Appropriately

During warm days, athletes should wear shorts and a T-shirt/singlet to practice. During cold days, athletes should wear layers. Bring warm athletic attire to wear during their warm ups with shorts and a T-shirt underneath to wear during the workouts.

### Get Involved

Parents are encouraged to help cheer on and support each of the team's members during practices and competitions. Parents will receive weekly emails from their child's coach with information on how they can volunteer at upcoming practices and competitions.



### Sports Nutrition for Young Endurance Athletes

#### The Basics

- Not eating well can lead to poor performance, nutrient deficiencies, poor growth and decreased immunity
- The goal is to eat nutritious food in the right portions and times

#### Carbohydrates

- Function as your body's preferred energy source
- Break down to glucose (sugar) to be used immediately or stored for later
- Children are more limited than adults in how much carbohydrates their muscles can store (girls more limited than boys)
- 45-65% of daily caloric intake should come from carbs (bread, pasta, cereal, potatoes, and beans, fruit, milk)
- Eat carbs at regular intervals throughout the day

#### Protein

- Helps your body repair damaged cells and make new ones
- Aids in immunity and bone formation
- 12-15% of daily caloric intake should come from protein (steak, chicken, eggs, cheese, milk, beans, legumes, nuts, soy)

#### Fats

- Important energy source that also help digest fat soluble vitamins such as vitamins A,D, E and K
- 25-35% of daily caloric intake should come from fat
- Most of these should come from plant sources (canola oil, peanut butter, avocado, salmon, walnuts, etc.)
- Less than 10% should come from saturated fat or animal sources (full fat dairy, butter, high fat beef)
- Less than 1% should come from transitive fats (packaged products like baked goods)

#### Fruits and Vegetables

- Rich in vitamin/mineral, phytochemicals, and fiber to improve immune function

#### Nutrition Before Exercise

- Goal is to top off your energy store
- AM exercise - eat breakfast, PM exercise - eat lunch

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 Hour = 1 Food Item   | Crackers, yogurt, applesauce or liquids like sports drink |
| 2 Hours = 2 Food Items | Peanut butter sandwich with fruit                         |
| 3 Hours = 3 Food Items | Pasta with chicken and yogurt                             |
| 4 Hours = 4 Food Items | Full meal: carb, protein, fruit/vegetable and yogurt      |

#### Nutrition During Exercise

- Goal is to stay hydrated and replenish blood glucose
- Dehydration can cause fatigue and impair performance
- Drink water throughout the day (carrying a water bottle can help the process)
- Use sports drinks for vigorous activity lasting over one hour to replenish fluids, carbs and electrolytes

#### Nutrition After Exercise

- Goals
  - Restore fluid and electrolytes lost in sweat
  - Replace glycogen stores (carbohydrates in the muscles)
  - Provide protein to aid in repair of damaged muscles
- It is best to begin your nutrition recovery 10-30 minutes after exercise (fluids, carbs, and a small amount of protein)
- Aim for around 20 g protein + carbs for long runs or hard workout/race days





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## NUTRITION

### Hydration

- Dehydration is the number one cause of decreased performance in athletes
- Even being dehydrated by 2% can cause declines in performance
- Up to 75% of athletes aged 8-18 come to practice dehydrated
- When you sweat, you lose fluids, sodium, potassium, and chloride
- Loss in blood volume means less blood and oxygen are going to the muscles and less waste is being carried away
- Dehydration also causes elevation in temperature and heart rate
- Throughout the day, look at the color of urine (correlates with your hydration 2 hours ago) and aim for very pale yellow color

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 2-3 Hours Before Activity           | 16-20 oz mostly water  |
| 1 Hour Before Activity              | Sip a sports drink (about 1 oz every 5 minutes)  |
| Every 15-20 Minutes During Activity | 4-8 oz water or sports drink <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports drink during exercise lasting 1 hour or longer OR in very hot/humid conditions OR very strenuous OR multiple sessions per day</li> <li>• Sports drinks have electrolytes and often a mix of sugars to diversify pathways</li> </ul> |
| After Activity                      | 16 oz for each pound of sweat lost during activity   |

### Iron

- Helps your body make hemoglobin and myoglobin, which carry oxygen throughout your body
- Part of numerous oxidative enzymes (essential for aerobic metabolism)
- Low iron intake + iron losses = poor oxygen-carry capacity (this is a problem for endurance athletes)
- Heme Iron = animal-based iron (red meat, dark meat poultry, egg, fish/shellfish)
- Non-Heme Iron = plant-based iron (lentils and other legumes, dark leafy vegetables, dried fruits like raisins, iron fortified grains)
- Consuming iron within 45 minutes of consuming calcium (dairy products) will inhibit iron absorption. It can be enhanced with the consumption of vitamin C (citrus).

### Calcium

- Increases bone health and muscle contraction
- If dietary intake is insufficient, then calcium will be taken from the bones
- Good sources are yogurt, cheese, milk, soy milk, tofu, fortified orange juice, kale, bok choy and broccoli
  - Note: oxalic acid in green vegetables inhibits calcium absorption, but blanching them in hot water for a few seconds will help remove the oxalic acid while keeping the calcium intact

### Vitamin D

- Helps bone health by aiding calcium absorption in the gut, functioning of the immune system and reducing inflammation
- We get vitamin D from sun exposure, tuna, mackerel, salmon, cod liver oil, fortified milk, fortified orange juice, yogurt, ready-to-eat cereal and eggs
- Very few people show signs of deficiency, but some of the more common symptoms are fatigue, muscle weakness, hair loss and frequent infection

### Does My Child Need a Multivitamin?

- If your child is missing one or more food groups, consider an age appropriate multivitamin.

| Food Group | Major Nutrients                        |
|------------|--|
| Fruits     | Vitamin C, potassium, fiber            |
| Vegetables | Vitamins A, C, E, and fiber            |
| Proteins   | Iron, zinc, magnesium, protein         |
| Dairy      | Vitamin D, calcium, protein            |
| Grains     | B vitamins, fiber, iron, carbohydrates |



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## BIG 5 STRETCHES

### The Big 5 Stretches

Having your runner do these five key stretches after practice each day will help improve their recovery and flexibility within the major muscle groups. Foam rolling can also help quicken the recovery process. Learn more about foam rolling techniques by watching this video: [bit.ly/20TkDRj](https://bit.ly/20TkDRj)



## HIP FLEXORS

Take a small lunge step with the front knee slightly bent and the back leg straight. Reach up with the same arm as the leg that is back for 15 seconds. Think long straight line from the palm of the hand to the heel of the foot. Push up through the palm of the hand. You will feel this in the front of your hip.



## Quads

Firmly plant one leg, reach back with the other leg bent behind you and pull your foot back and out, holding it at the toe. You should feel this in the whole front of your leg. Switch sides.



## Calves

Two Muscles in the calf mean 2 stretches : But can be done 2 ways either off a stair/ledge or pushing against a wall.

a. Standing on a ledge like a curb or a stair, hang one foot off the edge of it so that only your toe is touching it and the heel of your foot is reaching towards the ground. Hold for 15 seconds with leg straight, then 15 seconds with leg bent. This will stretch both muscles in your calf. Switch sides.

b. Lunge forward slightly with only a small knee bend in the front leg. Straighten the back leg so that you feel a stretch in your calf. Hold for 15 seconds while straight, then bend the same back leg and hold again for 15 seconds. This will stretch both muscles in your calf. Switch sides. (Can do standing or pushing against a wall.)

## Hamstrings

- a. legs together, toes straight, Bend over at the waist and reach for your toes – hold 20 seconds
- b. legs together, toes out in a V (heels together) – hold 20 seconds
- c. legs together, toes in (reversed V) – hold 20 seconds



## GLUTES

With one leg firmly planted, cross the other leg over to rest your foot on the top of the planted knee/thigh. The leg should be at a 90\* angle now. Bend the planted leg and push down on the knee of the crossed over leg. You should feel this in the glute of the crossed over leg. Switch sides.