

Tournament Weekend Nutrition & Hydration Checklist

Multiple games in one day stack sweat, heat, nerves, and fatigue. Players can feel fine in game one and crash by the final whistle of game three. This checklist helps your athlete stay fueled, hydrated, and ready from first kickoff to last.

How to use it: print one per family, or tick the boxes on your phone before each game.

⌚ Timing matters as much as the food itself.

THE NIGHT BEFORE

Top off the tank

Dinner the evening before the first game

- ☐ Eat a **balanced dinner with carbohydrates** (pasta, rice, potatoes), a lean protein, and some vegetables. Carbs the night before help fill energy stores for the next day.
- ☐ Keep it **familiar and not too heavy** — a giant or unusual meal can leave an athlete feeling sluggish the next morning.
- ☐ **Hydrate steadily through the evening** with water. Hydration is built over the day before, not chugged at kickoff.
- ☐ **Pack the bag tonight** (see the checklist below) so nothing is forgotten in the morning rush.

BEFORE THE FIRST GAME

Fuel & pre-hydrate

Breakfast ~2–4 hours before · top-up ~30–60 min before

- ☐ **Eat a carb-focused breakfast 2–4 hours before** the first kickoff — e.g. oatmeal, cereal with milk, toast with honey and a banana, or yogurt with fruit. Aim for comfortably full, not stuffed.
- ☐ **Early kickoff?** If there's no time for a full breakfast, go with a smaller carb-rich snack or a fruit smoothie that's easy to digest.
- ☐ **Drink water on the way:** roughly **16–20 oz, 2–3 hours before**, then about **7–10 oz, 20–30 minutes before** kickoff.
- ☐ **Keep a light, easy snack handy** for ~30–60 min pre-game if needed — a banana, applesauce pouch, or a few crackers.

Practice it first. Tournament day is not the day to try a brand-new food or drink. Rehearse the game-day routine during a normal training week so the body knows what to expect.

Sideline sips + snacks in the gaps between matches

- ☐ **Sip water regularly** — about **7–10 oz roughly every 15–20 minutes** of play, rather than waiting until thirsty.
- ☐ **Long, hot, or back-to-back games (60+ min):** add a **sports drink** to replace electrolytes (sodium) lost in sweat. For shorter, cooler single games, water is usually enough.
- ☐ **Less than 2 hours until the next game:** reach for **quick carbs + a little protein** — banana, orange slices, pretzels, granola bar, or a turkey-and-bread roll-up.
- ☐ **More than 2 hours until the next game:** treat it like another pre-game meal — a balanced, carb-forward snack or light meal.
- ☐ **Don't wait to feel hungry or tired** to grab a snack — by then it's already late. Fuel proactively in every gap.

Skip the energy drinks. Caffeine-and-sugar “energy” drinks are not a hydration strategy for youth athletes. Stick to water and, when needed, a true sports drink (it will carry a Nutrition Facts label).

AFTER THE FINAL GAME

Recover & rehydrate

Snack within ~30–60 min · full meal later

- ☐ **Refuel within about 30–60 minutes** with **carbs + protein** to kick-start recovery — chocolate milk, a fruit-and-yogurt smoothie, or a sandwich all work well.
- ☐ **Keep rehydrating** with water (and an electrolyte option if it was a hot, heavy-sweat day) until urine is pale again.
- ☐ **Eat a real, balanced meal** later with carbs, protein, and vegetables — especially important if there's another tournament day tomorrow.
- ☐ **Prioritize sleep.** Recovery is fuel + fluids + rest. Skip the late-night sugar stack so the body can actually recover overnight.

PACK-THE-BAG

Tournament cooler checklist

What to throw in the bag the night before

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| ☐ Full water bottle (+ a refill bottle) | ☐ Sandwich or wrap for longer gaps |
| ☐ A sports drink for long/hot days | ☐ Applesauce / fruit pouches |
| ☐ Bananas / oranges / grapes | ☐ Trail mix or a nut/seed option* |
| ☐ Pretzels or crackers (salt helps retain fluid) | ☐ Cooler + ice pack to keep food safe |
| ☐ Granola / cereal bars | ☐ Sunscreen, hat, extra socks |