



Partnership for
a Healthy Lincoln

Play Hard, Refuel Smart “Juicy” Choices Not Always Best

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Play – it’s a good thing. Whether you or your kids are involved in team sports or just playing hoops in your driveway, it does a body good. Playing organized sports helps participants develop their athletic skills and encourages them to work together as a team to achieve a common goal. But unstructured “play” or activity with others is also valuable because it allow for creativity and builds social skills.



Whether it’s the schoolroom or the workplace, professionals in both healthcare and education are recognizing the value of “activity breaks” in stimulating the brain instead of hours of sitting at a desk. In fact, play is so important to child development that a new study cites a lack of sensory perception skills in pre-school kids who don’t get enough.

Inactivity and poor nutrition choices, particularly in the calories we drink, have caused a national obesity epidemic, especially in children. In fact, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation’s largest philanthropy dedicated to health, says that this is the first generation of kids who will live shorter, sicker lives than their parents. What’s one of the best ways to prevent chronic obesity-related diseases in both kids and adults? You got it - playing actively for sixty minutes a day and making smarter nutrition choices.



So what’s all this got to do with fruit and fruit juice? It’s sometimes hard to navigate what’s healthy and what’s not when refueling after play or exercise, because anything that has the word “fruit” in it can lead you to believe it’s automatically healthy.

Fresh fruit is always a good alternative but if you’re reaching for some “fruity” snacks or drinks, think again. Fruit chewy snacks do not provide the same benefit as real fruit because they lack the fiber that makes one feel “full” and satisfied and they are generally much higher in sugar. Fruit-flavored drinks are rarely more than colored sugar water and no better than pop. “Lite” fruit-flavored drinks with artificial sweeteners, even if they have added vitamins, can have the effect of causing sugar cravings, frequently leading to indulging in calorie-laden sugary

snacks.

What about 100% fruit juice? Think twice about the amount of juice you or your children consume. Real fruit juice also contains lots of sugar and overconsumption of fruit juice can negatively affect teeth especially in youth. A new study finds that a substantial proportion of adults show some evidence of dental erosion, with

the most severe cases being among people who drink sugary soft drinks and fruit juices. The participants in the study with moderate and severe tooth wear consumed more soft drinks and fruit juices each day than the other groups.

So what's a good choice to recharge after sports, play, or a workout? Snack smart - reach for "real" fruit or veggies, and then rethink your drink. Water quenches your thirst best, and to add taste and interest, infuse your water with fruit or vegetables like cucumbers. Don't waste your workout - play hard and refuel smart! For more information visit Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln at HealthyLincoln.org. Click on Beverage Facts.



Dr. Bob Rauner is the Director of **Partnership for A Healthy Lincoln**, a local nonprofit dedicated to improving community health, wellness, and fitness. Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln works to improve wellness policies, conduct health research, and collaborate with community partners to promote healthy nutrition, increase fitness, and decrease obesity-related chronic diseases in our city and county. For more information visit www.healthylincoln.org