



BEYOND THE BLADE

Wellness Toolkits for Adaptive Figure Skaters

For skaters, families, and coaches

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Feelings, calm tools, helpful words, routines, and support

skatersense.org

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A Letter from Our Founder

Dear skaters, coaches, and families,

SkaterSense's mission is to make wellness information that is based on research easier to find and easier to use for adaptive skaters. Beyond the Blade brings together research, ideas made for adaptive skaters, and input from our skating community.

Inside, you will find three toolkits: Nutrition, Physical Health, and Mental Health. Each one has short tips, activities to fill in, and links to trusted resources. I hope these resources are helpful, and please feel free to share feedback and anything else you would like to see SkaterSense include at skatersense.org.

We skate together.

Audrey Hong

Founder, SkaterSense



Food Is Fuel

Food gives your body energy to skate. Different foods do different jobs.

Five food groups

- **Energy foods** give you energy: bread, rice, pasta, oatmeal, potatoes.
- **Protein foods** help muscles repair: chicken, fish, eggs, beans, peanut butter.
- **Fruits and vegetables** give vitamins: apples, bananas, berries, carrots, broccoli.
- **Dairy** keeps bones strong: milk, yogurt, cheese, soy milk with added calcium.
- **Healthy fats** help your body use vitamins: avocado, nuts, seeds, olive oil.

TRY IT: My favorite foods

Write one food you like from each group.

Energy food: _____

Dairy food: _____

Protein food: _____

Healthy fat: _____

Fruit or vegetable: _____

A new food to try: _____

Remember: All foods can fit. No food is “good” or “bad.”

For coaches and families

Use real foods and pictures, and use the same food words at home and at the rink. Talk about energy and strength, not weight or looks.



Build Your Plate

Your plate can change with how much you skate. Harder days need more energy foods.

Easy or rest day



Half fruits and vegetables



Fruits and vegetables

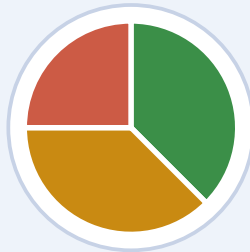


Energy foods



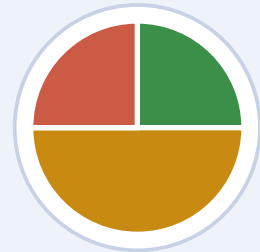
Protein

Regular skate day



Equal fruits/vegetables and energy

Hard skate day



Half energy foods

Add dairy and a drink.

Snack idea: an energy food + a protein food + a drink, like crackers, cheese, and water.

TRY IT: Check my plate

Check each one on your plate.

☐ An energy food

☐ A dairy food

☐ A protein food

☐ A drink

☐ A fruit or vegetable

3 or more checks = a balanced plate!

Remember: Eat when you are hungry. Stop when you are full.

For coaches and families

Plates are a guide, not a rule. Needs change with age, size, activity, and health. A registered dietitian can make a personal plan.



Fuel Your Rink Day

When you eat matters. Plan your food before and after you skate.

Skate day plan

1. **2 to 4 hours before:** eat a meal.
2. **1 to 2 hours before:** have a small snack, like a banana or crackers.
3. **While skating:** take a few sips of water every 15 to 20 minutes.
4. **Within an hour after:** have a snack with protein and a drink, like chocolate milk or yogurt and fruit.

TRY IT: Pack my bag

Check each thing you packed.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Water bottle | ☐ Backup snack |
| ☐ Snack for before | ☐ Medicine (if needed) |
| ☐ Snack for after | |

My after-skate snack: _____

Remember: Try new foods at practice, not on test or show day.

For coaches and families

Skating more than an hour? A snack or sports drink at a break helps. Pre-cut food and easy-open packages make eating easier.



Drink Water

Water helps your muscles and your mind. You still sweat on cold ice.

When to drink

- **Before:** 1 to 2 cups, 1 to 2 hours before skating.
- **During:** 2 to 3 big sips every 15 to 20 minutes.
- **After:** 1 to 2 cups right after skating.
- **Best drinks:** water most of the time and milk with meals. Sports drinks are for long or hard sessions. Limit soda and energy drinks.

TRY IT: My drink tracker

On a skate day, color a circle each time you drink.



My water bottle holds _____ ounces.

Remember: Drink on a schedule, not only when you feel thirsty.

For coaches and families

Pale yellow urine usually means enough fluid; dark yellow means drink more. Vitamins are best from food. Ask a doctor before giving vitamin pills or supplements.



My Week and More Help

Track your week, set one goal, and find more help.

TRY IT: My Fit 5 week

Check a box each day you reach the goal.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
5 fruits and vegetables	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5 bottles of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Move my body	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My goal for next week: _____

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Adaptive Athletes
Shirley Ryan
AbilityLab



Skating Nutrition
U.S. Figure Skating



Fit 5
Special Olympics



Young Athletes
Special Olympics
Canada



Find a Dietitian
eatright.org

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Move Your Body

Skating is great exercise. Moving in different ways helps you skate stronger and safer.

Four ways to move

- **Endurance** keeps your heart strong: skating, walking, dancing, swimming.
- **Strength** makes your muscles strong: squats, wall push-ups, heel raises.
- **Flexibility** helps you move freely: gentle stretches after skating.
- **Balance** helps you stay steady: standing on one foot, heel-to-toe walking.

How much? Ages 6 to 17: 60 minutes every day. Adults: 150 minutes a week, plus strength exercises 2 days a week.

TRY IT: My moves

Check the activities you like.

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ Skating | ☐ Walking | ☐ Dancing | ☐ Swimming |
| ☐ Biking | ☐ Yoga | ☐ Bowling | ☐ Basketball |

One I will do this week: _____

Remember: Some movement is better than none. Pick moves you enjoy.

For coaches and families

Sleep helps muscles recover: teens need 8 to 10 hours and adults 7 hours or more. If a skater can't reach these amounts, any regular movement still helps.

Warm Up and Cool Down

Warm up for 5 to 10 minutes before you put on your skates. Cool down after.

Warm up



March
30 seconds



Arm circles
10 each way



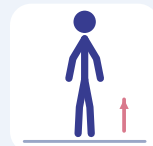
Side steps
10 each way



Leg swings
10 each leg



Mini squats
10 times



Heel raises
10 times

Cool down

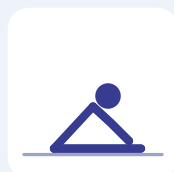
Walk slowly for 2 to 3 minutes. Then hold each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds.



Calf



Thigh



Back of leg



Shoulder

TRY IT: My warm-up

Check each move you did today.

☐ March

☐ Arm circles

☐ Side steps

☐ Leg swings

☐ Mini squats

☐ Heel raises

Remember: A stretch should feel like a gentle pull, never pain.

For coaches and families

Skip warm-ups that press on the head or neck, like forward rolls. For skaters with Down syndrome, ask the doctor about a neck check.

Balance and Strength

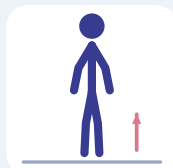
Do these off the ice 2 to 3 days a week. Use a chair or wall to help you balance.

Six exercises



One-foot balance

Hold 10 to 30 seconds



Heel raises

10 times



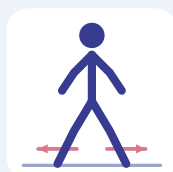
Sit to stand

10 times



Wall push-ups

10 times



Side steps

10 each way



Bridge

10 times

TRY IT: My exercise week

Write 3 exercises. Check a box each day you do them.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
1. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Remember: Go slow. Good form matters more than more reps.

For coaches and families

To make an exercise easier, hold on with both hands, take smaller steps, or do fewer. Strength and balance training can help prevent injuries.

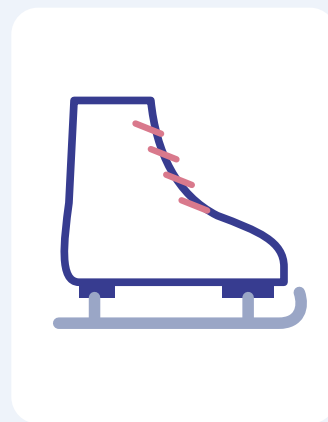


Boots and Gear

A good fit and the right gear keep you safe and comfortable.

Boot check

- **Heel:** push it all the way back. It should not lift.
- **Toes:** a little room to wiggle.
- **Laces:** snug at the ankle, a little looser at the top two hooks.
- **Top:** one finger fits between the boot and your leg.
- **Socks:** one thin pair.



Bring: a helmet, gloves, warm layers (rinks are about 50°F), blade guards for walking, and a towel to dry your blades.

TRY IT: Boot and gear check

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Heel stays down | ☐ Helmet buckled |
| ☐ Toes can wiggle | ☐ Gloves and warm layers on |
| ☐ Laces snug, not tight | ☐ Blades dried after skating |

A sore spot I noticed: _____

Remember: Boot pain is a signal to speak up.

For coaches and families

Watch for sore spots at the front of the ankle, back of the heel, and toes. Helmets are strongly recommended for beginners and skaters with balance problems or seizures.



Skate Safe and Learn More

Know how to fall, how to get up, and when to stop.

Falling and getting up

If you fall: bend your knees, fall to the side, tuck your chin, and keep your hands in.

To get up:



1. Hands and knees



2. One foot up



3. Other foot up



4. Push up slowly

Stop and tell your coach if you have sharp pain, swelling, or dizziness, or if you hit your head. When in doubt, sit it out.

If I get hurt, I will tell: _____

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Adaptive Skating
U.S. Figure Skating



Fit 5
Special Olympics



Healthy Athletes
Free fitness
screenings



NCHPAD
Exercise for people
with disabilities



HEADS UP
CDC concussion
safety

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Know Your Feelings

All feelings are OK. Naming how you feel can help you feel better.

Research on the mental health of adaptive skaters is still limited, so these tips come from sport psychology and Special Olympics.

Feelings



Happy



Calm



Excited



Nervous



Frustrated



Sad



Tired

Your body gives clues

- **Nervous:** fast heartbeat, butterflies in your tummy
- **Frustrated:** hot face, tight fists
- **Tired:** heavy arms and legs, hard to focus

TRY IT: How do I feel?

Circle one face in each row.

Before skating:



After skating:



Remember: All feelings are OK. They come and go.

For coaches and families

Signs of stress can look different for people with intellectual disabilities, like changes in sleep, eating, or behavior. If you notice a change, talk with a doctor.



Calm Your Body

When feelings get big, try one of these.

Calm tools

1. **Smell the flower, blow out the candle.** Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.
2. **Squeeze and let go.** Squeeze your hands tight for 3 seconds. Then relax them.
3. **Picture a calm place.** Close your eyes and think of a place you love.
4. **Take a break.** Get a drink of water or listen to a song you like.

TRY IT: My calm tools

Check the tools that help you.

☐ Flower and candle

☐ Squeeze and let go

☐ Calm place

☐ Take a break

Practice: color a circle each day you take 5 slow breaths.



Mon



Tue



Wed



Thu



Fri



Sat



Sun

Remember: Practice when you feel calm, so the tools are ready.

For coaches and families

Practice these tools together when the skater is calm. Then use them at the boards, between turns, and at home.



Helpful Words

What you say to yourself matters. Helpful words can help you skate and feel better.

Instead of...

"Don't fall."

"I can't do it."

"Everyone is watching."

Try saying...

"Soft knees. Look up."

"I'm learning."

"Eyes on my spot."

After a fall or a mistake: Stop. Take a slow breath. Try again.

TRY IT: My helpful words

A worry I have: _____

What I can say instead: _____

My cue word: _____

Remember: Say what to do, not what not to do.

For coaches and families

Tell skaters what to do ("look up") instead of what not to do ("don't look down"). Praise effort, not just results.



My Skate Day Routine

Doing the same steps each time helps you feel ready.

A simple routine

1. Pack your bag.
2. Get to the rink early.
3. Warm up.
4. Take a slow breath.
5. Say your cue word.
6. Skate and have fun!

Big day? Before a test or show, visit the rink and practice your program in your costume.

TRY IT: My routine

Write your own steps.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Remember: Focus on what you can control, like your breathing, your warm-up, and how hard you try.

For coaches and families

Picture schedules and photos of the rink help skaters know what comes next. Ask one short question at a time, and give extra time to answer.



Rest and Support

You are more than a skater. Rest and support help you feel your best.

Ways to recharge

- Sleep well and eat well.
- Move your body. It can lift your mood, and skating counts!
- Spend time with friends. Skating with others helps you feel part of a team.
- Do something fun away from the rink.

TRY IT: My support team

A coach I can talk to: _____

A family member I can talk to: _____

A friend I can talk to: _____

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Strong Minds
Special Olympics



Mental Health
U.S. Figure Skating



NAMI HelpLine
Family support



NADD
Mental health and IDD

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