

**Nutritional Advice For Your Swimmer**  
*By Kathy Wise, Registered Dietician*  
(courtesy of Hoover High School Swimming and Diving Team)

### **Timing is Everything**

When it comes to fueling your body for swimming, timing is everything. Most swimmers have heard they need carbohydrate, some protein and fat for proper nutrition. But knowing when to eat these nutrients is critical for optimal performance. In general, here are some guidelines for incorporating carbohydrate, protein and fat into day:

#### **Carbohydrate is King:**

" Spread carbohydrate intake through out the day (i.e. smaller meals and frequent snacks). This keeps blood sugar levels adequate and stable.

" During two-a-days: Eat or drink some form of carbohydrate before morning practice. Carbohydrate fluids work well for those who do not like to eat breakfast (i.e. fruit or vegetable juice or fruit smoothie)

" For long workouts (90 minutes or longer) use a form of a carbohydrate-electrolyte drink, such as Gatorade.

#### **Carbohydrate and Protein for a Winning Team:**

" Within 30 minutes after practice have some carbohydrate and protein. This enables the body to replenish glycogen stores and repair muscle tissue. This is perhaps the most important time to eat!!!! Recovery beverages are excellent for the locker room and on the ride home. (i.e. Accelerade®, Endurox R4®)

" Eat again within two hours post-practice has elapsed. This is critical to maximizing recovery! (i.e. Baked potato, Chicken breast, salad and fruit or Beans, rice and vegetables)

#### **Fat fits in but NOT too close to workout or meet:**

" Fat is necessary, but contributes little to the workout or immediate post-workout recovery period. Add some fat to the evening meal but keep it the healthy. (i.e. nuts, olive oil)

What should swimmers eat before practice? At meets?

The optimal pre-practice, or pre-meet meal should contain primarily carbohydrates with little or no fat. Carbohydrate-rich foods like bagels and other breads, rice, pasta, cereal, fruit juices are easily digested and absorbed. Rule of thumb: 0.5 - 2.0 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight one to four hours prior to exercise.

### **Timeline for fueling for practice or meet:**

" 1 to 2 hours before = primarily carbohydrate (i.e. bagel and jelly, pancakes and syrup)

" 3 to 4 hours before = primarily carbohydrate with some lean protein (i.e. toast, eggs, and juice, or oatmeal, raisins and skim milk or turkey sub, fruit and skim milk, or pasta with lean meat sauce)

" 5 to 6 hours before = primarily carbohydrate with lean protein and some fat (i.e., pasta with red sauce, meatballs, garlic bread or baked potato, grilled chicken, vegetables and fruit)

### **Fluid Replacement Tips**

" Weigh in before and after training and drink at least 2 cups of fluid for every pound of weight lost. (Dehydration hinders performance.)

" Label and keep your own fluid bottle by the side of the pool when working out and drink between repeats and sets. (Do not share fluid bottles.)

" Sports drinks like Gatorade®, stimulate fluid absorption and maintain proper fluid balance in the body while providing glucose to working muscles.

" Avoid caffeine-filled beverages (i.e. Red Bull®). They are diuretics, contribute to fluid loss and can cause an upset stomach.

" Check the color of your urine, it should be pale or clear. Dark-colored urine may indicate you are dehydrated and need to drink fluids.

" Carbonated drinks should be avoided because they can cause gas and bloating