

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Swimmers do not have to worry too much about dehydration when training.**

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**Performance supplements can provide an edge for training and competition in teen athletes.**

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**Dairy products like milk and yogurt are a good source of important nutrients for athletes.**

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**Protein powder is the best option to increase muscle mass and improve performance.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Sugar is bad for you and may hurt your performance.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Protein is all an athlete needs to perform well.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Vitamin and mineral supplements provide energy to perform well.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Sports drinks like Gatorade may be beneficial for athletes to improve endurance.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Cutting back on carbs will help with weight loss and improve performance.**

**MYTH OR FACT?**

**Eating well to perform well means some planning ahead and responsibility on the part of the athlete.**

## **Additional resources:**

- Nancy Clark RD book you can borrow lives in the USC cupboard**
- USC website many resources with specific suggestions with regard to food choices under “parent info” then “documents” and BTuck**
- One-on-one with an RD is an option for more in depth personal support**

## **Let’s get started...**

- What are the important nutrients in our diet?**

Carbohydrate, Protein, Fat, Fluids, Vitamins and Minerals and Fibre.

- What are some food sources of these nutrients?**

- What are the roles of these nutrients?**

-CHO is the fuel for your gastank

-Protein is the mechanic rebuilding/repairing muscles

-Fluids are the oil to keep the engine from seizing, the lubrication for joints and allows the blood to move nutrients throughout the body.

**\*Keep in mind there is no one magic superfood that will help you to perform better and what works for you may not work for another athlete.**

**\*Remember, never try new foods on race day. Stick with your tried and true choices.**

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Swimmers do not have to worry too much about dehydration when training.**

### **MYTH**

All athletes need to be concerned about proper hydration, even swimmers. It can be particularly difficult for swimmers to know if and how much they are sweating so it's not a good idea to simply rely on thirst. To ensure proper hydration, drink regularly before, during and after a workout. Ensure your urine is a pale yellow color like the color of lemonade. If your urine is darker colored and concentrated, you may not be drinking enough. Please see handout on USC website for more specific recommendations.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Performance supplements can provide an edge for training and competition in teen athletes.**

### **MYTH**

Performance supplements or “ergogenic aids” are popular with many athletes as they promise improved performance through muscle building, weight loss and prolonged endurance. They come in pill, powder, food and drink forms and make many claims, most of which are unproven. In particular to note, research for these supplements is performed on adults and so not indicated for teens who are still growing and maturing. Something else to consider is that some supplements may contain banned substances, which may restrict you from being able to compete. Furthermore, supplements are expensive. Focus on making sure you are training regularly, achieving a well-balanced diet, that you are well-hydrated and getting enough sleep. This is your foundation to perform well.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Dairy products like milk and yogourt are a good source of important nutrients for athletes.**

## **FACT**

Dairy products sometimes get a bad rap. Milk products contain important nutrients like protein, fat and carbohydrate providing readily available energy for performance as well as protein for building and repairing muscle in recovery after training/competing. Fat provides a feeling of satiety and allows for absorption of fat soluble vitamins like Vit D which along with calcium is important for growing bones. Some individuals who are lactose intolerant lack the ability to properly digest milk products and can have pain and abdominal discomfort afterward. Fortified soymilk has the next closest profile to cow's milk. Other plant-based milk alternatives are deficient in protein. Check the Nutrition Facts label if you aren't sure.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Protein powder is the best option to increase muscle mass and improve performance.**

## **MYTH**

Protein powder is a popular supplement. Protein is an important macronutrient with many roles, the main one being building and repairing muscle and it also helps satisfy hunger. Protein is found in many foods including meat and eggs, milk products and some plant foods like soy and other legumes/beans, nuts and nut butters. If you focus on getting protein from food sources, protein powder is unnecessary. It can be costly and you may not be getting enough of the other important nutrients found in protein foods like iron and B vitamins, which are essential and especially important for athletes. Focus on including protein from food combined w CHO at each meal and snack. Please see handout on USC website for recommendations for specific protein needs.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Sugar is bad for you and may hurt your performance.**

Sugar is an essential nutrient for everyone.

Another word for sugar is carbohydrate. Complex carbohydrates include bread, cereals, pasta, rice and other grains. They are also found in dairy products like milk and yogourt as well as in fruit and some vegetables like potatoes and corn. Simple carbohydrates include table sugar, honey, maple syrup, juice etc.

Carbohydrate converts to glucose in the body providing the most efficient and available fuel. A limited amount of carbohydrate is stored as glycogen in muscles and liver providing immediate energy as needed. Once used up, glycogen needs to be replaced or you will have less available energy for endurance...you will run out of gas.

Focus on including a variety of foods high in complex carbohydrates. Foods containing large amounts of simple sugars are usually deficient in important nutrients like antioxidants and fibre but may still be included as part of a healthy diet. Please see handouts on USC website for recommendations for balanced meal and snack ideas.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Protein is all an athlete needs to perform well.**

## **MYTH**

Carbohydrate is the most efficient fuel source for working muscles and brain and is stored as glycogen in the muscles for sustained energy. Athletes who rely on protein as the mainstay of their training diet risk energy deficits late in competition affecting endurance and performance.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Vitamin and mineral supplements provide energy to perform well.**

### **MYTH**

Only calories from food provide energy in the body. Vitamins and minerals play a role in energy metabolism but they in and of themselves do not provide energy. Athletes who rely on supplements for energy do so at the risk of not having enough energy to compete efficiently.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Sports drinks like Gatorade may be beneficial for athletes to improve endurance.**

### **FACT**

Sports drinks can provide additional energy to improve endurance and replace electrolytes lost when training longer than one hour. Also, they have been shown to be beneficial in limiting “mental errors” in stop and go sports such as in competitive events for swimmers. Furthermore, it is well known that athletes tend to drink more and are better hydrated than when relying on water alone. For swimmers who have difficulty eating before early morning practice, try using a sports drink before, during and after practice especially if you have another workout planned later in the day. Please see handout on USC website for homemade sports drink recipe.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Cutting back on carbs will help with weight loss and improve performance.**

### **MYTH**

Carbohydrate is the most efficient fuel source for working muscles and brain. If you cut back on carbohydrate intake during training season, you risk training and competing at a deficit as well as increased risk for injury. Weight loss should never be a priority for athletes during training season, especially for growing teens. Furthermore, measuring weight is not a reliable indicator of health, muscle mass or ability to perform.

## **MYTH OR FACT?**

**Eating well to perform well means some planning ahead and responsibility on the part of the athlete.**

### **FACT**

As an athlete, it takes some planning ahead to make sure you have balanced choices on hand to pack the snacks and meals you will need to train and perform well. Plan ahead and think about what your body might need for the activity you will be doing...before, during and afterward. Sometimes this may mean eating before or after your workout even though you don't feel hungry or eating something different than what you actually want to eat. This may feel like hard work but will be worth it providing much needed fuel during training and competition. Remember, swim races are won and lost by fractions of a second so planning ahead may give you that competitive edge you need to achieve your goals.