

NUTRITION FOR SWIM MEETS

While swimmers should focus on eating balanced and nutritious foods all of the time, eating for swim meets is often a popular topic. This article will give you some guidelines to following when eating before, during, and after the meet.

Eating at swim meets does not allow for you to eat a normal breakfast, lunch and dinner as you are constantly on the go. Therefore, in order to ensure that your body has the right levels of fuel, you need to plan in advance what and when you will eat during the meet.

BEFORE THE MEET

Swimmers should not rely on the pre-meet meal to supply the energy for the meet, as the energy that will be used during the races should already be stored in the muscles from carbohydrate-rich meals eaten during the previous two to three days. However, the swimmer should not skip the pre-meet meal even if there is every early start to the meet.

EATS BEFORE THE MEET

- Cereal --- Toast
- Bagel ---- Pancakes
- Juice ---- Fruit

The pre-meet meal should be eaten 2-4 hours before the first race to allow the food to be digested and leave the stomach. If there is still food in the stomach when it comes time to race, oxygen-rich blood will be going to the stomach to aid digestion instead of the muscles where it is needed. The meal should be about 500-1000 calories and should be high in carbohydrates and low in fat and protein. The most important thing to remember about the pre-race meal is to eat--and eat mostly carbohydrates.

DURING THE MEET

The most important thing to remember when eating during the meet is to drink plenty of fluids and eat small amounts of carbohydrate-rich foods. If you have less than an hour between events, stick to water, diluted sports drinks and fruit juices, part of a high carbohydrate energy bar, fruit or a few lo-fat crackers.

If you have 2-4 hours between events you can eat something more substantial such as a bagel, toast, fruit and granola bars, or dry cereal. Avoid anything that has too much fat, fiber, or protein as these nutrients slow down digestion. Remember, that if there is food in your stomach there is blood aiding in digestion that could be supplying the muscles with oxygen.

EATS DURING THE MEET

- Bagels
- Chili in a cup
- Dry Cereal
- Fruit
- Fruit Juices (Diluted)
- Fruit Smoothies
- Low-fat Crackers
- Low-fat Muffins
- Water
- Oatmeal in a cup
- Soy Nuts
- Pretzels
- Sandwiches of turkey or other low-fat meat
- Soups in cups
- Sports Drinks
- Trail Mix
- Vegetables
- Jerky
- Yogurt

EATS DURING THE MEET

If you have more than four hours between events as often happens during a prelim-final meet, add some protein to your high-fluid and high carbohydrate intake. The protein aids your body in recovery and this extended period of time allows it to be digested.

Do not rely on concession stands at swim meets to provide you with food during the meet. They often do not provide very nutritious selections. Stay away from the pizza, nachos, hot dogs, and candy and go for the bagels, vegetables, water, and fruit. Never rely on the concession stand to provide healthy choices; always plan ahead and pack nutritious foods that you are familiar with. Meet days are not times to try something new.

RECOVERY NUTRITION

Recovery nutrition is about planning an eating and drinking strategy that helps your body:

1. Recover from the physical stresses of racing

2. Prepare for the racing to come

This is also called the **REPAIR – PREPARE** approach to Swim Meet eating.

Recovery nutrition is a technique which provides the swimmer's body with what they need to recover ... e.g. carbohydrates to replace used up energy, proteins for muscle building and repair ... and prepare for the next day of competition.

In between races, recovery nutrition is about replenishing energy stores quickly and effectively so that the next race can be completed at maximum speed.

FOODS THAT AID IN A RECOVERY NUTRITION PROGRAM BETWEEN RACES INCLUDE

- Fruit
- Fruit Smoothies
- Dried Fruits
- Sports Drinks

To maximize the impact of these "recovery foods" they need to be eaten or drunk as soon as possible after racing.

AFTER THE MEET

To speed up recovery after meets, be sure to drink 16 to 24 ounces of fluids such as water or diluted sports drink or fruit juice before your last race. Also, within a half hour after your last race eat a high-carbohydrate snack with some protein. This will aid in your recovery. Then within two hours of the end of the meet, eat a full balanced meal.

- Spaghetti with Meat Sauce
- Bean Burritos with rice
- Low-fat beef or chicken with potatoes or rice
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Fruit
- Vegetables

SCHEDULE WHAT TO EAT WHEN TO EAT (RECAP)

- **Early Morning Heats (8am-10am)**
- Eat breakfast between 6am-7am– light meal, complex carbohydrates
- Cereal
- Toast
- Bagel
- Juice
- Fruit
- Fruit Smoothie

- **Afternoon Heats/Semi-Finals/Finals (2pm-4pm)**
- Eat between 11am-1pm depending on start time – allow approx 2 hours
- Pasta Salad
- Cup of noodles
- Small sandwich
- Salad
- Rice

- **Evening Events (6pm-9pm)**
- Eat between 4 pm - 5 pm meal (early dinner) – small quantities
- Spaghetti with Meat Sauce
- Bean Burritos with rice
- Low-fat beef or chicken with potatoes or rice
- Milk
- Yogurt
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Breads
- Rice