

Race Day Nutrition

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Nutrition Basics-

No one food can supply all the nutrients your body needs, so eating a variety of foods is optimal. There are 40 different nutrients you need every day to produce energy.

What you eat throughout the day is what counts; not a single food or a single meal. Don't let trying to find a quick fix or a magic bullet get you off track with your optimal fueling plan. Practice high energy eating all the time and will be easier to figure out the amount of fuel your body needs on race day.

The same way you need to plan ahead during training days, you should do the same for race days. You need fuel throughout a day of competition, but you may need to break it up into smaller meals. There is no magic pill to help you race faster, but not eating well or staying hydrated can do you in. Know your style for eating and snacking and prepare accordingly.

Week of the Meet –

You should be practicing your optimal fuel intake throughout the week. We no longer promote carbohydrate loading since you should be eating carbohydrate foods at all meals and snacks to promote better glycogen (reserved energy) storage all the time. A day or two before you race make sure you are getting optimal energy. Enjoy a meal that has lean protein and is low in fat as well as your carbs.

Pasta is always a favorite, but go easy on the heavy cream or oils or high fat meat sauces, add a side salad and bread.

A chicken breast with a baked potato or rice pilaf with a side a veggies helps fill you up but still leave room for dessert.

Morning of the Meet –

Don't rely on this meal to provide all the energy you will need for the day. The energy used for multiple races at a meet is coming from what is already stored in the muscles. However, the first meal of the day gets your metabolism going for the day, so avoid the temptation to just skip it. Ideally, you want the pre-meet meal to be about 2-4 hours before your first race (not counting warm up). If too much food is still in the stomach when it comes time to race, the oxygen rich blood your muscles need will be diverted to the stomach to try and continue digestion. The food may sit heavy and cause upset. The size of the meal varies but the goal is for it to be somewhere 500 – 1000 calories.

During the Meet –

The main emphasis during the meet is hydration, but that doesn't mean only water. If you have less than an hour between events water is fine but you can also do 4-6 ounces of a sports drink or even a decaffeinated unsweet tea with some fruit juice in it. Have a couple bite of a carbohydrate energy bar or a handful of dried fruit or even a couple of crackers.

If you have more time between morning heats, eat something a little more substantial like a small bagel or dry cereal or a granola bar. Protein is fine in small quantities, but avoid things that are high in fiber and/or fat.

Snacks to Eat During the Meet –

In between races you are replenishing fuel stores quickly and topping off so your next race can be with maximum effort.

The snacks should be small and high in carbohydrate content. Fluids between races are important as well. Don't rely on concession stands or vending machines to provide you with what you need. Plan to bring foods you are familiar with and enjoy. Don't wait until race day to try new things, even if Michael Phelps says it works for him.

Crackers, Unsweet Dry Cereals, Graham Crackers, Pita (fresh or dry), Dry Fruit, 100% Fruit Juice, Hummus, Veggie Sticks, Edamame or Roasted Soy Nuts, Trail Mix, Pretzels, Yogurt or Yogurt Drinks, Low Fat Muffins, Pudding, Energy Bars, Low Fat Mozzarella Cheese sticks or single serving cheese slice, nut or nut butters, turkey roll are good choices too.

Recovery Nutrition –

Recovery nutrition requires planning too since it has two purposes. The first part of this process is to recover from the physical stress of racing of the current session. The second part is providing your body with the right mix of fuel to prepare you for the racing either later that day at finals or for the following day. The better you recover each day, the better your overall training will become and that's what helps you become a stronger and fitter swimmer.

Snacks should be consumed within 30 minutes of completing competition followed by a full meal within 2 hours.

Bean burrito with Rice

Low fat beef or chicken entrée with potatoes or rice and vegetables

Smoothie made with Greek yogurt for protein and fresh fruit

Whole wheat pita sandwich with 4-5 oz of turkey or ham with lettuce and tomato, 1 cup pasta & 2 tangerine

THE STARVING-AFTER-PRACTICE SNACKER

This swimmer enters the car or home, starving and about to die if he doesn't get some food fast. I encourage parents to rewind the day, and look at the child's actual intake at lunch, and even breakfast. It may have been mediocre. There may even be evidence: leftovers in the lunchbox, or a half eaten bowl of cereal in the morning. When swimmers eat inadequately at the beginning and middle of the day, they may be very hungry when they return home after a day of school and swim practice.

Remedy: Encourage your swimmer to "front-load"—eat a hearty breakfast and lunch including a variety of food groups and a good protein source. This is especially important for girls who may have problems with late night snacking.

Example: cereal + milk + fruit + toast + nut butter; egg + cheese + ham + English muffin + 4 oz. 100% fruit juice.

THE NEVER-FULL SNACKER

Within an hour after a meal, this swimmer is hungry! Several reasons may contribute to this scenario, such as not eating enough food at mealtime, eating the wrong foods (nutrient-poor foods aren't nutritious or satisfying enough to carry a swimmer 3-4 hours until the next meal), or a 'habit of asking' rather than true hunger. No matter what the reason is, evaluate meal timing, the food choices, and the food balance of meals and snacks.

Remedy: Get back on a regular schedule (3 meals + 1-3 snacks depending on swimmer's age and activity level). Boost the balance of food and nutrients, erring on the side of whole, healthy and nutritious. Don't let the nutrient-poor foods crowd out the good stuff.

Example: 3 meals + 2-3 snacks using whole foods - grain, meat/non-meat protein foods, fruit, veggie, dairy & healthy fats

THE TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT SNACKER

Some swimmers aren't big on snacking, or may prefer to graze, nibbling through the day and saving their appetite for meals. But they can lose track of the total amount eaten within the day. This tends to be an eating personality or style within the swimmer.

Remedy: Make sure to offer nutritious snacks, and if not eaten, boost the main meals with extra options and let your swimmer self-regulate his appetite. Most swimmers will eat to match their calorie requirements if given the opportunity and plenty of wholesome food.

THE 'I LOVE MY JUNK' SNACKER

Some swimmers succumb to readily available snacks in their pool and school environment, which may be processed foods instead of fresh foods, sweets rather than naturally sweetened items, and fried chips or fries over baked foods. These snack foods can easily take over the swimmer's diet, contributing a significant amount of empty calories. Contrary to popular belief, you can re-program this!

Remedy: First, adopt a guideline that outlines how many 'junk food items' the swimmer can have each day with a maximum of 1 or 2 per day. This way, favorite foods are not completely eliminated, which backfires anyway, but limited to a reasonable amount. Second, point out which foods have a limit (e.g., desserts). Third, let your swimmer have a say in which 'junk foods' he will choose for the day. Congratulations! You've just negotiated a happy middle ground-- one that allows some 'junk,' but sets a limit.

Examples of Fun Foods: soda, cookies, candy, pie, cake, donuts, chips, and French fries. Limit two per day which might be a donut after morning practice and dessert after dinner.

THE HEALTHY SNACKER

This is the swimmer and eater we are all trying to develop! One who chooses to eat wholesome, real foods at snack time, most of the time. A swimmer who doesn't go overboard with too much food or too many empty calories, and who listens to his body, eats mindfully and appreciates his own hunger and fullness.

Target: Stay on course with timing of snacks, a variety of foods, and a healthy balance of nutritious food. If you get side-tracked, check the solutions above, and get back on track.

Reprinted from: What kind of snacking style do you have?

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The timing of these snacks is based on whether you are training or have a meet. The pre-training snacks can be consumed up to 30 minutes before you go jump in the pool. If you are eating a pre-game meal before a meet/ event and you have at least two hours before you swim, you can choose a larger content and more of a mixed protein and carbohydrate meal.

Pre-Training Snacks/ Meals – Low Glycemic Foods, less simple sugar/ processed foods, Limit Caffeine at this time if possible

Fluid Needs – ***** 12 to 16 oz water before practice	1 cup cereal, multi grain (5 g fiber plus 7-8 g protein or more) plus ½ cup milk	½ cup trail mix – nuts, dried fruit, m&m's, dry cereal	1 flour tortilla with 1-2 ounces shredded chicken, 1 slice avocado and 2 tbsp salsa	NutriGrain Bar 1 cup light yogurt
Whole grain waffle with jam	Low fat muffin	Fresh fruit plus ½ bagel with pb or nutella	Energy/ Sports Bars Find ones with 12-15g protein	6 saltines 2 ounces low fat cheese
Small Milk Shake, low fat For a higher calorie choice	½ -1 c oatmeal with 1 TBsp Honey and 1 TBsp Walnuts	1 med baked potato w 1 TBsp sour cream & cheddar cheese	1 cup plain pasta plus baked chicken breast, 1 c milk	

For Meets, you need to fuel between events so you don't fade with the longer sets and especially to help keep you in top form for consecutive days of intense tournament play. During training, it's the same thing. Use the timing guideline for when you need to fuel. Learn to bring things with you – more than you think you will need because you never know how long the meet will take to finish the last event.

During Training or between Events at a Meet – for every hour of time at the pool, after warmup and the first hour of training or races p

***Fluids	Water – 4 – 8 oz between events	Gatorade/ Powerade in small amounts 4- 6oz	3 Dill pickles if you think sports drinks are too sweet	Fruit Juice Smoothie Milk Based Smoothie if time
Foods – gels or bars are easy	Dried fruit or fruit cups	Pretzels or pita chips	½ c trail mix, homemade	PowerBar Energy Gels (gummy), 3 or 4 per hour

This is critical for your recovery during multiple day meets or those with prelims plus finals. I think you can begin to understand the value of having fuel coming in quickly. Again, you have to plan ahead and make sure you get that snack in within the 30 minutes of finishing.

Recovery Nutrition – should be a combination of carbohydrate and protein – should be consumed within 30 minutes of finishing

Accelerate/ Endurox/ Gatorade Recovery/ Choc Milk	16 – 20 oz fruit smoothie	½ sandwich w fresh fruit	Baked potato with toppings	Myoplex Life or Boost/ Ensure
¼ cup nuts with fresh fruit	Baked flour tortilla with 1 oz avocado and 1 TBsp salsa.	4 TBsp hummus on a half toasted pita	½ whole-wheat bagel with 1 TBsp peanut butter	1 ounce string cheese; 1 medium apple

EVENING SNACKS – 150 to 200 calories, it's okay to have a snack depending on when dinner was

Something Light or a Heavier Snack for Those eating lightly during the meet.	½ whole wheat pita w 3 oz turkey and 1 slice reduced fat cheese	Luna Bar, Clif Bar or Balance Gold	8 medium pretzel twists with 2 TBsp mustard	1 Fudgesicle, low fat if you need a low calorie option but still looking for sweet
Half a slice of angel food cake with 1 TBsp thawed, frozen light whipped topping and 1 maraschino cherry	1 frozen waffle, toasted and topped with 2 sliced strawberries and 1 TBsp whipped cream	6-oz tub Yoplait White Chocolate Strawberry nonfat yogurt or Greek yogurt	1 cup sugar-free hot chocolate with 2 TBsp miniature marshmallows	2 chocolate chip cookies (store-bought), heated in microwave for 10 seconds.