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I love the Olympics! From super stars to underdogs, such an amazing display of athleticism from all over the world in sporting events from the familiar to the unique.

I thought it would be interesting to research how Olympic swimmers eat. I found while they varied in the details, what they all had in common is that the athlete KNOWS what they eat and they know it is a lot of calories. I found reports on diet from swimmers such as Michael Phelps, Janet Evans, Ryan Lochte and Peter Vanderkaay.

While Phelps and Lochte both boast about the excessive calories they consume, Lochte prides himself in having eliminated junk food to fine tune his training. Janet Evans has a family history of heart disease so she focuses on fiber and healthy fats. Vanderkaay's example meal plan for the day included PowerBar products.

An Olympian's diet will include a lot more calories than the growing swimmers of CCSC. We of course need to look at an example of their training to understand how they can consume so many calories. Michael Phelps reportedly consumes 10,000 calories a day. While experts question the accuracy of this number, the bottom line is he eats a lot! However, I found one website which reported Phelps trains 6 hours a day, 6 days a week.

While all of this nutrition, training and performance of an Olympian is

entertaining, what does it mean for the child swimmer? It means that even super stars make nutrition a focus in training, and of course you are all super stars in training!

Make a plan

State meet is over. You have a few more weeks before juggling the school schedule. Take this time to make a plan, test the plan, and tweak the plan.

Strengths and weaknesses:

We all have good habits and not so good habits. Perhaps you love fruit, but love candy too. Put it in your daily plan to swap out the candy for fruit. Perhaps you skip breakfast because you love to sleep... Put it in your plan to make a "grab and go" breakfast the night before. Some times our family and friends can see habits better than ourselves. Parents and swimmers can work on this together.

Nutrition Basics

In general the nutrition goals are as follows:

1. Lean Protein – little or no fast food, consume low or no fat milk or yogurt, better snack ideas such as low fat cheese, and peanut butter. No fried foods, chicken breast, fish, extra lean beef or pork area all examples of lean protein.
2. Sufficient carbohydrates (specifically wholesome, fiber rich foods) – use whole wheat bread over white, higher fiber cereals/granola bars, and adding fruits and vegetables to every day! In particularly eating the whole fruit as opposed to just drinking juice.

3. Hydration – drink water throughout the day, all day! Choose water most often over soft drinks or sports drinks.

4. Fat – Often your fats will come from lean protein and cooking methods. When adding fat in cooking choose vegetable oils. When incorporating fat into your meal plan choose nuts, nut butter, and avocado.

Portions

This can be the biggest challenge especially in hungry, growing athletic kids. As opposed to controlling your child's portions, work on behaviors when it comes to food:

- Eat slowly
- Eat without distractions (i.e. TV)
- Make a single serving plate, then take a break. If still hungry, make ½ portion extra serving.
- Avoid extreme hunger, have snack ready and available (car ride home after school, car ride after practice, if a rushed morning meant no breakfast – food for the car)
- Drink, drink, drink WATER. Hydration is a big part of training nutrition, but can also help digest food and aid in satiety.

Perhaps watching incredible athletes perform amazing displays of athleticism will inspire you to fine tune your training.

As your plan evolves, and is tested, you might find adjustments need to be made. Make them right away, and try again.



Monthly challenge:

Parents – Think about what your family nutrition plan is now, and how it can be improved.

Teenage Athlete – Sit down, write out a nutrition plan. Ask mom and dad for help.