

# Nutrition Handout for Swimmers

Eating the right foods at the right times will enable you to swim faster by helping you to:

- Train Harder
- Recover Faster
- Stay Healthy

## CARBS FOR PERFORMANCE

Carbohydrates are the best fuel for your muscles and will help you to train harder and get the most from your practice.

**Complex Carbs** provide your body with sustained energy, vitamins, minerals, and fiber for good health. All your meals and snacks should be based on complex carbs. For example: whole grain breads/cereals/pasta, brown rice, quinoa, oats, beans, lentils, potatoes, fruits.

**Refined Carbs** provide a quick form of energy, provide little nutrition, and can cause you to gain body fat. Limit your intake of refined carbs to occasional treats. Examples: candy, soda, sugary breakfast cereals, chips, cookies, cakes.

## PROTEIN FOR POWER

Athletes need more protein to repair and build muscle. However, eating huge amounts of protein is not necessary and will not give you bigger muscles. Instead, the extra protein is stored as fat or burned as a poor source of energy when muscle carb stores are low.

Spread your protein intake throughout the day (BF, lunch, dinner, snacks) and aim for 20-25g protein in a meal/snack (25-30g for bigger athletes)

20-25g protein is provided by:

- 3-4oz meat, poultry, or fish
- 1.5 cups cooked lentils
- 2.5 cups beans/chickpeas
- 1 cup of tofu, edamame
- 2.5 cups milk
- 1 cup Greek yogurt
- 3 oz cheddar cheese
- 3-4 eggs

## FATS TO REDUCE INFLAMMATION

Healthy fats are good for your brain and heart and help reduce inflammation in your body.

- Olive, canola & avocado oil
- Nuts and 100% nut butters
- Avocados
- Oily fish e.g. salmon, mackerel, sardines

## ATHLETE'S PLATE



**COMPLEX CARBS:**

**Half plate**

**LEAN PROTEIN:**

**Quarter plate (3-4 oz)**

**VEGGIES/SALAD**

**Quarter plate**

**HEALTHY FAT:**

**1 tablespoon**

**Light Training/Rest Days:** reduce carbs to 1/3 plate, quarter plate for protein and fill up the rest of your plate with plenty of veggies/salad.

**PRE-TRAINING SNACKS** increase your energy levels, focus and motivation to train harder.

1-2 hour before practice:

- Fruit smoothie (fruit, milk/yogurt)
- Granola and low-fat yogurt
- Toast with peanut butter and banana

When there is 30-60mins before practice, eat carbohydrate snacks that digest quickly e.g., fruit, dry breakfast cereal, popcorn, granola bar. If you go straight to the pool from school, pack foods that you can eat on the way. Learn through trial and error what works best for you – the same snack does not work for everyone.

## FLUIDS

All swimmers sweat during hard training and must keep well hydrated. Dehydration can cause nausea, headaches, muscle cramps and dizziness which negatively impacts your performance.

To prevent dehydration:

- Drink fluid with your pre-training snack
- Sip at frequent intervals during practice
- Water only for practices 1 to 1.5 hrs
- Sports drinks for practices 1.5 to 2 hrs
- Drink fluid with your post-training snack

**POST-TRAINING SNACKS** start the process of refuelling, repairing your muscles and boosting your immune system. Have a carb-based snack with some protein within 30-60 minutes. This is very important when you are training twice a day. Chocolate milk is easy to take after hard training and contains the right amount of carbs and protein. Other good choices are fruit plus Greek yogurt, or PBJ sandwich.

## COMPETITION NUTRITION

Food intake is reduced when a swimmer has a busy race schedule, feels nervous, or must eat away from home during travel meets.

The **right pre-competition** meal will:

- Digest easily and avoid stomach upset
- Top up muscle energy stores and hydration levels
- Increase your energy levels, focus, and desire to race hard.

When you have one hour or less before warmup, eat carbohydrate rich foods that are low in fat and fiber for easy digestion. When you have 2-3 hours before warmup, you can include some protein and fat.

### Good Pre-Competition Breakfast Choices

- Breakfast cereals and low-fat milk
- Oatmeal served with yogurt and fruit
- Toast and peanut butter and banana
- Toast with scrambled eggs

- Plus, 100% juice, milk, hot chocolate, herbal teas

Avoid fried bacon, sausages, fried eggs, fried potatoes - too long to digest!

### Good Pre-Competition Lunch Choices

- Sub sandwich with lean meat and salad
- Pasta in a tomato sauce with chicken
- Rice or noodles with lean meat/veg
- Grilled chicken burger in a bun
- Plus, water, 100% juice, or smoothies to drink

Avoid cheeseburgers, fries, deep fried food

### Snacks between Races

Choosing the right snack between races will help you maintain good energy levels. Pack a variety of sweet & savory snacks and more than you think you may need.

- **Less than 15 mins:** sports drink only
- **15-30 mins:** small low fat, carbohydrate snack e.g., crackers, pretzels
- **30-60 mins:** 2-3 low fat, carbohydrate snacks e.g., fruit, low fat granola bar
- **1 hr or more:** low fat carbohydrate snack with some protein e.g. cheese string, boiled egg, yogurt, jerky, nuts/trail mix

**Post-competition meal** should be just like a training day meal (half your plate carbs, quarter plate protein, quarter plate veggies)

- Eat dinner as soon as possible after your last race to help you recover quicker for the next day of racing.
- If eating away from home, find the restaurants close to the pool and pre-book a table.
- Choose meals that contain plenty of carbs and avoid ordering meals containing large servings of meat
- Choose familiar foods that digest easily so you can fuel your body and get a good night's sleep, ready to perform well again the next day.