

New Swim Parent Information Cheat Sheet:



If you are new to COOL and/or new to swimming, you may have some general questions about the sport and our team. To get started, let me encourage you to look around the COOL website and available resources like the Parents Handbook and the FAQ page on the website. You will find great sections like Glossary of Terms, How to Be a Supportive Swim Parent and The 10 Commandments for Swimming Parents. The missourivalleyswimming.com and usaswimming.org websites also have great information as well. If you sign up on usaswimming.org, you can see your swimmers progress throughout their entire swimming career! It's pretty cool stuff.

However, here you will find some other helpful tips and tricks as you get started with COOL.

Gear:

COOL does not require any gear to participate (other than a cap, suit, and goggles – pretty essential). Team suits, caps for boys, and other items are not required, but are eventually recommended.

Swimsuit:

- A. Polyester vs. Lycra suits – normal swimsuits are made mostly of Lycra. They are great for fun in the sun, not so much for competitive swimming. The Lycra falls apart and in less than 3 months, small white snags will begin to show up on your swimmers' suit. Polyester suits are more durable. They are snug and will last up to a year. You will need to buy a size or two smaller for that snug fit. The snugger the fit, the better in the water. Polyester is more expensive but worth it. We suggest Swim Outlet to find the best deals on suits and gear. Navigate to Swim Outlet through the COOL "apparel" tab and COOL will receive a small percentage of your order back. This is a great way to help the team while purchasing things you will likely buy anyway.
- B. How to measure for a suit? Polyester suits run in double digit sizes – 24, 26, etc. It should be snug but not too snug. When you lift the straps up off of the shoulders they should not touch the ears. They may leave red marks on the shoulder for the first few times in the pool. To help with this you can put Vaseline on the shoulders before getting in the pool.

Goggles and bungee strap – Swim goggles are a constant – the strap seems to constantly break. The greatest thing is the bungee strap. These cost approximately \$6 (or less at swimoutlet.com) and can extend the life of the goggles to 6 months to a year. They come in reflective and non-reflective. The reflective is clear and great for indoor use, not so great for outdoors. They do not keep the sun out. The non-reflective keeps the sun out and helps with the light indoors. They have a slight tint and are "shiny" on the outside. Your swimmer will let you know their preference.

Swim Caps (silicone vs. Latex)

Hair Care - With all the time in the pool, my swimmers' hair turned to straw. I couldn't brush through it and it was so dry. My hairdresser recommended wetting her hair and putting in conditioner before I put her cap on. She rinses it out in the pool before she gets out after every practice. It has been amazing.

Bag – small or big – If your swimmer is trying out swimming, I recommend the Speedo swing pack. It works great. It holds the gear needed for a novice swimmer and costs approx. \$20. If you have a more serious swimmer the large Speedo or TYR professional bag is recommended. They have a place for a wet suit, to keep the other items in your bag dry, as well as other pockets for all kinds of stuff. They hold towels, zoomers, snacks, mp3 players, and anything else your swimmer needs for a meet or practice. The bottoms are waterproof so nothing will damage the bottom of the bag. They are very durable and should last for the life of your swimmers career. Swimoutlet.com sells the big bags for approx. \$50 compared to \$67 at swim stores.

Bonus gear: training gear, parka, towel pants, etc. – There are items that are “nice to have” but don't “need to have”. Zoomers (flippers) are used in practice to help with leg strength. Towel pants and a parkas are nice to have after practice or in between races. They help keep your swimmer warm but are a bit pricier. Parka's run about \$60 and towel pants are about \$40.

Food:

Usaswimming.org website – nutrition center. This is a great resource for when your swimmer is eating you out of house and home! Also really paying attention to the food pyramid is always a great idea for your athlete. Here are two articles that were published on the website (go back frequently for additional information):

Nutritional Cheat Sheet Part 1: Keep in mind that in order for nutrition to have an appreciable impact on your performance, you have to eat the right way on a year-round basis. Not that you can't occasionally indulge in some fast food, or sweets; just make sure that your daily diet follows the 80% rule, meaning that you make the right choices at least 80% of the time and reserve the other 20% percent for some of your favorite "cheat" foods. This way, you'll know you're supplying your body with the nutrients it needs to feel and perform at your best. The following recommendations will help you stay on the right path:

The Right Kinds of Carbs

Make sure that the bulk of your diet comes from complex carbohydrate sources (approximately 50-60% of your total caloric intake). It's important that these carbs are predominantly in the form of whole grain breads and cereals, whole wheat pasta, brown rice, yams (or sweet potatoes) and beans. Try to stay away from white pasta, rice, breads and bagels as much as possible. They have an unfavorable effect on blood sugar levels and can really hamper your performance.

Protein Intake

Try to opt for quality, low-fat protein sources like skinless, white meat chicken and turkey, lean beef, eggs, tuna, flounder, sole and cod, skim and low fat milks, low-fat yogurt (not the "fruit on the bottom kind") and tofu. Limit your intake of high-fat cuts of beef and pork, hot dogs, chicken nuggets, fried chicken and pretty much all fast food, as much as possible. Proteins should make up anywhere between 20-25% of your total caloric intake.

Watch the Fat

Keep an eye on your fat intake. As a general rule, try to limit your intake of saturated fats, or any type of "hydrogenated oils" and "trans" fats. You can do this by cutting down on higher-fat cuts of beef and pork and all types of fast food. Also try to read as many nutrition labels as possible, as most clearly list the breakdown of both total fat, and saturated fats. Make sure that any food you choose has no more than 3 grams of fat per every 100 calories (i.e. in a 200 calorie food, 6 grams of fat is the limit), and that no more than about 1/3 of the total fat comes from saturated fat. So, that same 200 calorie food with 6 grams of total fat should have no more than 2 grams of saturated fat. Overall, fats should comprise anywhere from 15-20% of your total caloric intake.

Don't Forget Fruits and Vegetables

Eat as many fresh vegetables and fruits as you possibly can. Most kids fall way short of the recommended 5-9 daily servings of fruits and vegetables. They provide tons of vitamins and minerals, as well as much needed fiber.

Hydrate!

Proper hydration is absolutely key! You can't drink next to nothing for several days and think that jumbo Powerade you're swigging in the car on the way to the pool is going to do anything. Here's a breakdown of how much you should be drinking and when:

Overall water consumption for kids age 9 to 13 should be 2.0 to 2.5 liters per day, whereas 14-18 year-olds should strive for 2.5 to 3.5 liters, with girls falling near the lower end of the range, and boys at the higher end. Keep in mind, we're talking about water here, not juices, sports drinks, or soda. This should be your target for each and every day, with your fluid requirements increasing with athletic activity.

Sports drinks are really only necessary for activities lasting at least one hour in duration, but can otherwise be consumed in moderation if they encourage young athletes to drink. Watch the sugar content, though. When choosing a sports drink, look for one with a 6-8% carbohydrate concentration, or 50-80 calories per 8 ounces, with 120-170 milligrams of sodium.

Nutritional Cheat Sheet Part II - Provided that you've adhered to the guidelines we published in *last week's article*, there are a couple of steps you can take the day of the meet to help make sure that you perform at your best.

Eat Breakfast

Start out with a proper breakfast. This does not entail grabbing a bagel with cream cheese and eating it in the car with a large orange juice on the way there. The bagel, especially if it's made with white

flour can really jack up your blood sugar levels. Granted, the fat in the cream cheese will blunt this affect somewhat, but add in the OJ and you'll be all fired up for warm-ups and likely crash shortly thereafter.

The best-case scenario is to sit down and eat some slow cooked oatmeal (prepared the night before) with fruit, or some eggs and whole grain toast, or whole grain cereal with skim, or low fat milk. If it's an early meet and you must eat on the run, at least make it a whole grain bagel with peanut butter, as the these two foods together make up what is known as a complete protein by providing your body with all the essential amino acids it needs. Trade in the OJ for a lower sugar sports drink and you're good to go. Some more foods to stay away from include bacon, sausage, croissants, doughnuts and sugary breakfast cereals.

As far as what you should have in your bag for snacking, I think the best way to address this is with a list of what you should bring, vs. what you should not bring.

What to Bring To A Meet:

Going to a meet is a lot like going on a camping trip. There are some essentials that you absolutely cannot do without, as well as some luxury items that may make the time more pleasant for you and your family.

Essentials:

- Swim Suit
- Team Cap (for girls – optional for boys)
- Towels (2 or 3 – they get wet in a hurry!)
- Goggles (and an extra pair)
- Sleeping bag or blanket for the swimmer to relax on (it gets cold for the wet swimmers in the crash area)
- Sweats/Warm ups
- Dry clothes to wear after the meet
- Pen or Sharpie marker (to write events/heats/lanes on your swimmer)
- Highlighter – for heat sheets

Some other suggestions:

- A chair for you... but not for the home meets (Spooktacular and Rock the Blocks) since we'll be volunteering.
- Cards, games, books, CD player etc. to keep your child entertained between events.
- Anything to keep you entertained between events (Books, CD's, etc.)
- Healthy Snacks

What to put in a cooler:

- At least 32 oz. of water to drink during and after the meet.
- No more than 16-20 oz. of sports drinks that meet the criteria stated in the nutrition article.
- Energy bars: Try to stick with bars that have less than 10 grams of fat, and less than 35% of their calories from sugar (the lower the better). To calculate this: multiply the number of

grams of sugar by 4 and then divide that number into the total calories. Some recommended brands include: Kashi TLC Bars, and Odwalla Bars.

- 4. Whole grain pretzels, crackers and cereals.
- 5. Nuts, seeds and dried fruit (in limited quantity due to the relatively high sugar content).
- 6. Lower Sugar Fruits: Strawberries, Apples, Cantaloupe, Blueberries, Raspberries and peaches.

How do I sign up for a meet?

The coolswimteam.com website has all of your personal information for your swimmer. Once you register for the season, you will be assigned a username and password to access your account. You can view the upcoming meets and events.

To register for an event, click on the “attend this event” button. It will take you to the page where you can commit or not for the event. You will not be able to select what races your swimmer participates in though. The coaches determine that based on what they see in practices. However, there is a notes section to give them any additional information like what days you will attend the meet and what you don’t want your swimmer to participate in.

The forms that are on the website for every meet are very helpful. They have the general information like location, time, regulations, etc. They also contain the session and order that the races will take place. This helps in estimating the time of your swimmers races.

Things not in the Parents Handbook:

Crash Area – this is an area designated for parents and swimmers at every meet. There is typically a section carved out for each team. The Olathe Cool Lightning usually has a banner indicating where the swimmers should “hang out.” You can bring blankets, pillows, chairs, ipods, games, etc. Bring anything that your swimmer wants to be comfortable between races.

A staff member is assigned to the Crash Area to announce each race. This is done so the swimmers and parents will know when it is their time to be in the pool. There is 1st, 2nd and final call for each event. You can then go find a seat inside the pool area to watch their race.

Heat Sheets –The heat sheet has the events, heats and lane information for every swimmer. After visiting the cool website, before the meet, use the information of the races your swimmer is registered in to find them and locate the heat and lane information. To make it easy for your swimmer and coaches you write the information from the heat sheet on your swimmers arm or leg. They need to know the Event #, Heat, Lane and Race. Highlight the race information on the Heat Sheet and use the sharpie to write the information on your swimmers arm or leg. The format for their information is as follows:

Event	Heat	Lane	Race
15	2	4	50 Free
21	4	2	100

The races are announced over the intercom and typically go 1st call to last call for each race. Typically, they have 3 chances to get to the pool deck. Each meet have deck clerks that are responsible for ensuring all swimmers are lined up according to event, heat and lane. I recommend familiarizing yourself with these folks at the meets. They are a lot of help. We love the parent volunteers, they are essential to meets running smoothly!

Results of each race are printed and posted at each meet. If you are like me and can't wait to see how your swimmer did, this is wonderful. They are posted in different areas for each meet, typically in a hallway outside of the pool area.

The folks in white and blue:

These ladies and gentlemen are the officials. They watch the swimmers in the pool to ensure that their strokes, wall touches and turns are legal. If their arm goes up, it means that a swimmer has been disqualified from the event. Don't worry if your swimmer gets disqualified. Everyone does at one point or another. It's part of the learning process. After each race, your swimmer will talk to the coach to get feedback. The coaches are great at communicating with the swimmers what they did great and what to adjust for next time.

How can I get involved and participate:

Rock the Blocks and Spooktacular – these are the two home meets that COOL hosts every season. All parents will be asked to help make these meets great. I didn't realize how much work goes into putting on successful meets until I worked at one. It gave me an appreciation for all of the work that everyone does for our team. It also helps with getting to know the other parents and swimmers. We are all one team and knowing each other and encouraging each other makes every meet fun!