

EATING ON THE ROAD

By Linda Houtkooper, Ph.D., R.D.

Linda is a Food Nutrition Specialist at the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Arizona. She was once the author of a question/answer column in Swimming World magazine and she gave a presentation on nutrition at the ASCA World Clinic.

What should swimmers eat when swim meet or vacation takes them on the road? Should the foods for best performance be sacrificed for popular, convenient, fatty foods or is there something else they can eat?

Swimming success depends on ability, top-notch training, coaching, and good nutrition. Proper nutrition for swimmers includes foods that provide all essential nutrients in the proper amounts for good health and performance.

Nutrition-conscious swimmers know that they need high carbohydrate, low fat foods to perform their best. The best diet for training and performance is the VIM diet.

V = Variety of wholesome foods that provide the proper amount of nutrients to maintain desirable levels of body water, lean body mass, and fat. These foods will also maintain good health.

I = Eat foods that are individualized. Foods should reflect personal like. They should also make it possible to follow religious food preferences. Avoid foods that cause allergic reactions, and those the body can't tolerate. Only use nutritional supplements recommended by your doctor or registered dietician.

M = Eat moderate amounts of foods that are high in fat, sugar, or sodium.

Use the suggestions below to maintain your top-notch VIM diet on the road.

Breakfast

Order pancakes, French toast, muffins, toast, or cereal, and fruit or fruit juices. These foods are all higher in carbohydrates and lower in fat than the traditional egg and bacon breakfasts. Request that toast, pancakes, or muffins be served without butter or margarine. Use syrup or jam to keep carbohydrate high and fat to a low. Choose low fat dairy products, milk, hot chocolate, etc. Fresh fruit may be expensive or difficult to find. Carry fresh and/or dried fruits with you. Cold cereal can be a good breakfast or snack; carry boxes in the car or on the bus. Keep milk in a cooler or purchase it at convenience stores.

Lunch

Remember that most of the fat in sandwiches is found in the spread. Prepare or order your sandwiches without the “mayo,” “special sauce,” or butter. Use ketchup or mustard instead. Peanut butter and jelly is a favorite and easy to make, but remember that peanut butter is high in fat. Use whole grain bread and spread more jelly, while using a small amount of peanut butter. Avoid all fried foods at fast food places. Salad bars can be lifesavers, but watch the dressings, olives, fried croutons, nuts, and seeds; or you could end up with more fat than any super burger could hope to hold! Use low fat luncheon meats such as skinless poultry and lean meats. Low fat bologna can be found in the stores, but read labels carefully. Baked potatoes should be ordered with butter and sauces “on the side. Add just enough to moisten the carbohydrate-rich potato. Soups and crackers can be good low fat meals; avoid cream soups. Fruit juices and low fat milk are more nutritious choices than soda pop.

Dinner

Go to restaurants that offer high-carbohydrate foods such as pasta, baked potatoes, rice, breads, vegetables, salad bars, and fruits. Eat thick crust pizzas with low fat toppings such as green peppers, mushrooms, Canadian bacon, and onions. Avoid fatty meats, extra cheese, and olives. Eat breads without butter or margarine. Use jelly instead. Ask for salads with dressing “on the side” so you can add minimal amounts yourself.

Snacks

Eat whole grain bread, muffins, fruit, fruit breads, low fat crackers,

pretzels, unbuttered popcorn, oatmeal raisin cookies, fig bars,
animal
crackers, fruit juice, breakfast cereal, canned meal replacements,
and
dried and fresh fruits.