

Nutrition and Swimming

I really believe that if we want to swim with excellence we must also look at all areas of how the swimmers take care of their bodies. This includes nutrition and sleep. I have tried to compile a shortened summary of nutrition and swimming. At the bottom I have included links to further reading for you to explore this more and get more details about swimming and recovery. Remember, just eating the right food does not make you swim fast, training does, but proper nutrition plays a key role in getting the best training possible.

During a swimming workout is not when you get faster. We are actually tearing your body down so it can then replenish itself and restore itself and THAT is when you gain muscle and get faster. (that is a quick, hopefully simplified version) However, if you do not replenish your body correctly you are actually doing more harm than good and will continue in a process of “feeling torn down!”

Carbohydrates are the main fuel then blood sugars, then protein. When enough Carbohydrates are not available or you “run out” during a practice, the body will begin to break down protein in muscles. This is when you start to feel like you “can’t keep up” or have “legs of lead”. Not only must we make sure we have the correct fuel for our body we also need to ensure there is plenty of water to help move those nutrients around and make them easily accessible.

- BRING WATER TO PRACTICE! You may be in a pool but you still easily lose water and dehydrate. Older swimmers should bring Gatorade or Powerade.
- Before workouts fuel your body with a small carbohydrate meal and/or drink
 - o Fruit, Fruit juice, one piece of whole wheat toast, Cheerios, Rice Krispies, Total
- Start to replenish Carbohydrates during practice if workouts are longer than an 90min.
 - o Sports drinks
- Eat a substantial Carbohydrate snack with some protein and low in fat, immediately to 30 min. after a workout.
 - o Yogurt, Skim Chocolate milk, Bagel with Peanut Butter, Bananas or Apples with peanut butter, Trail mix with cereal, peanuts and fruit, granola bars, multi-grain bars, fig bars
- Eat a main meal within 2 hours of finishing a workout
 - o Low in fat. Some fat is fine but keep it further away from your workouts.
- Drink water ALL DAY to keep nutrients moving to keep repairing and recovering and preparing for the next day’s workout or meet.

- During meets eat a high-carb/moderate-protein snack immediately after warm-ups and each race with a substantial meal within 2 hours of the finish of the meet. Eat a moderate lunch during your largest break.
- During the meet stay hydrated by drinking water or sports drinks often. When your race is called grab a small carb snack and a long drink to fuel your body
 - o Apple slices, half a banana, FRUIT!
- Eat a substantial meal within 2 hours of the end of the meet. Include substantial carbs and moderate protein to replenish quickly, especially if it is a 2 day meet
- A high carb breakfast with moderate protein is also important before a meet. You can make it two smaller breakfasts by eating part before warm-ups and more after.

The first three carbs people often think of are Pasta, Rice and Bread, they are all white and refined sugar as opposed to natural sugars found in fruits and vegetables that also have vitamins and anti-oxidants.

The more colorful foods you eat you will also help your body more by lowering free radicals that cause more damage to your muscles.

- Colorful foods include, but are not limited to:

Apples, Strawberries, Blueberries, Bananas, Oranges, Kiwi, Watermelon, Raspberries, Grapes, Mango, Papaya, Apricots, Red peppers, Broccoli, Corn, Squash, Carrots, Peas, Green beans, Tomatoes

Again, please do not take my word on this as I am not a doctor or dietitian, I have just done research on this before for myself for swimming and working out and have refreshed and looked up new things to compile it for those who would like to know this. I myself often thought I was eating something that was “fine” but did not realize how much eating really does impact swimming. Keep telling your swimmers that during workouts we tear down muscles and now they need to repair them, what are you repairing them with? That will determine your future performance! Feel free to ask me questions on this or for more snack ideas.

Links:

USA Swimming Website- Coaches section- sport performance-Nutrition

<http://www.usaswimming.org/USASWeb/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabId=1263&Alias=Rainbow&Lang=en>