

## Nutrition for the Competitive Swimmer

*This information comes from the US Swimming Institute for Sports Nutrition "Nutrition for A Winning Performance"*

Your performance in swimming and everything is influenced by everything you do. Your food choices have the most effect on your performance due to the long term and short term benefits. A proper diet that is well balanced and includes a variety of foods will help a person's training and performance while also achieving a healthy lifestyle.

Top performance in swimming, or in any sport, demands an efficient use of your body's energy supply. Your body needs energy as well as water and oxygen. Food provides the necessary fuel, or energy, that athletes need to perform at top levels. Food supplies fuel for muscles to work and perform efficiently. Therefore, all athletes must be aware of their daily caloric and fluid needs during training, competition (before, during and after the event). To achieve top performance all athletes must maintain an adequate intake of calories and proper nutrition.

It is important to realize that there are no magical nutrition remedies to develop and instill a balanced diet. It is important that athletes eat a variety of wholesome foods from the four food groups – milk, meat, fruits and vegetables, and breads and cereals. As a competitive swimmer your ideal diet should include the following percentage of calories: 55% to 65% carbohydrates, 20% to 30% fats and 10% to 15% proteins. This nutrition information is to help you understand good nutrition and to provide guidelines for competitive swimmer at four major times of the training season. These time periods are:

1. Nutrition During Training: The training time is the period of time that is most critical since most of the athlete's time is spent here. The average daily time spent in training can vary tremendously and it is possible for some swimmers to be training as much as 4-6 hours a day which will burn 2500 to 4000 calories. Therefore, a diet high in carbohydrates is very important and critical to optimal training. A high carbohydrate diet will replenish the lost calories from hard training. An athlete can minimize depletion of energy stores by consuming high carbohydrate foods and/or drinks in the first 30 min. following a workout.
2. Pre-Event Nutrition: The pre-event diet has a major purpose, which is to provide sufficient energy and fluid for the athlete. A high carbohydrate diet with plenty of fluids should be emphasized 2 to 3 days before competition. The pre-event meal should be eaten three to four hours before the event and should include a light, high carbohydrate meal.
3. Nutrition During Competition: Nutrition during competition is dependent on nutrition during the training times of day to day life. For competition that covers a 3 to 4 day period, you should consume plenty of fluids and each meal should include high carbohydrate, low fat selections.
4. Nutrition After Competition: High intensity work as during competition will deplete the muscles energy supplies. To make sure energy stores are maintained, carbohydrates play an important role after competition. Small amounts of protein within 30 a thirty minute window will also help rebuild muscle tissue.

**Great Snacks for Before and After Practice:** Fruit, raisins, low fat nutrition/cereal bars, yogurt, bagels, pretzels or breadsticks. Try a PB&J on wholewheat bread. Pretzels and low-fat popcorn or dry cereal. Drink juice, low-fat milk, chocolate milk, lots of water, and athletic drinks in moderation. **Avoid:** Empty calories in chips, cupcakes, ice cream, candy or soft drinks. Avoid fried foods (hard to digest and can upset stomach) around competitions. Limit mayo and lots of salad dressings. Make sure you get adequate amounts of protein in chicken, fish, pork and lower fat cuts of meat.

Remember...You are an athlete and must take the best care of your body for the best performance!