

SWIMMING EVENT NUTRITION GUIDELINES

1 Competition/Training Nutrition Plan

Since swim meets can last ALL day (County Age Groups), or ALL week (ASA Nationals), swimmers need to be aware of what they are eating and drinking either before, during or after they race.

2 Timing of the Pre-Event Meal

The type of food swimmers eat may influence how they perform in the water.

2.1 Fats

Fatty foods take a long time to digest. The following foods are good examples:

- Crisps
- Chips
- Doughnuts
- Danish Pastries

Protein foods that also contain fat take the longest time to digest. For example:

- Peanut Butter
- Chicken
- Pork
- Beef
- Fish

If the swimmer consumes these types of food just before they compete, the blood rushes to the stomach to try to digest the food. Unfortunately the muscles required for swimming competitively also require the maximum blood supply. Something has to give, the body cannot do both at the same time, and it may result in a poor performance and probably stomach ache.

2.2 Carbohydrates

Your body needs glucose for energy. The main source of glucose is the carbohydrate (sugars and starches) - in your diet. If you do not have sufficient carbohydrates in your diet you will not be able to train as hard or as long and fatigue (tiredness) will set in. Any foods consisting of Carbohydrates can be digested quicker than foods mentioned above. Here are some examples:

- Pasta
- Cereals
- Bagels
- Wholemeal Bread
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Rice
- Breakfast Bars
- Baked Potato

These foods can be out of the stomach in approximately 2 hours therefore the **pre-event meal** should be composed of primarily carbohydrates. It also appears that carbohydrates digested up to 3 hours before exercise may improve performance.

As you can see there is quite a selection. So, which carbohydrate is best? Well it depends on how quickly the body converts the carbohydrate to glucose. Here is a table of some carbohydrates and whether they are high, medium or low speed in being changed to glucose:

High	Medium	Low
White Rice	Brown Rice	Pasta
Watermelon	Banana	Apple
Baked Potato	Boiled Potato	Baked Beans
Sports Drink	Squash	Milk
Honey	Muesli Bar	Sponge Cake
Bagel	Bread	Fruit Cake
Jelly Beans	Crisps	Chocolate

Try to eat High-speed foods just before, during and immediately after exercise. Remember; eat at least 2 hours before exercise then about 30 minutes before exercise have a 50g snack, steer away from bulky snacks as these could cause stomach pains. Experiment with different snacks from the 'high' list.

If you train for longer than an hour, you will need to consume carbohydrates to avoid fatigue. Use an 'Isotonic' sports drink, as this will give you the carbohydrate as well as the fluid (see fluids).

The best time to refuel and restock those depleted glucose stores ready for the next work out is immediately after exercise.

3 Eating at All Day Competitions

The same principle used to time pre-event meals also applies to all day competitions.

If a swimmer races at 10:00 and again 2 hours later, a meal high in fat and protein will more than likely be in the swimmers stomach when they get ready to race. This will lead to a possible reduced level of performance and a stomach ache.

3.1 Guidelines

Time to Next Event	Food / Drink
1 hour or less	The swimmer should stick to carbohydrate foods and juices. E.g. orange juice, bananas, plain toast or a diluted carbohydrate sports drink. Swimmers should limit the amount of food taken.
2 to 4 hours	Swimmers should add more carbohydrate foods and juices. E.g. bagels, hot cereals and muffins along with some type of pure fruit juice.
4 hours or more	Swimmers can add more protein with carbohydrate foods. E.g. a light spread of peanut butter on a muffin or bagel or a chicken sandwich on two slices of bread with pure fruit juice.

It is also vitally important that swimmers should drink fluids, (from their OWN BOTTLE and NOT fizzy drinks), as they can quickly become dehydrated on the hot poolside. Waiting until the swimmer is thirsty is TOO LATE.