

Training Better

SWIMMERS NEED TO EAT A BALANCED DIET IN ORDER TO TRAIN TO THEIR MAXIMUM ABILITY; THEY NEED THE RIGHT AMOUNTS OF CERTAIN FOOD GROUPS AND FLUIDS AT CERTAIN TIMES. WHAT YOU EAT AND DRINK CAN DETERMINE HOW YOU TRAIN, RECOVER AND COMPETE.

WHAT SHOULD I EAT AND WHEN?

As a trained athlete, swimmers need to eat food that provides them with lots of energy! Energy is found in CARBOHYDRATES and in FAT. How much energy we use depends on how hard we train and how long we train for. CARBOHYDRATES are used for low intensity training, but mainly for more high intensity work.

When we work at a low intensity, after 30-45mins we begin to use FATS as well as CARBOHYDRATES. As time goes on we gradually use more FATS as our carbohydrate stores become depleted, and consequently use less carbohydrates. After 1 hour and a half most of us will now be using more FATS to supply energy than CARBOHYDRATES! Therefore we need to eat lots of complex carbohydrates that can be broken down slowly during training, but also we need to eat a small amount of FATS also, to help us keep going after our CARBS run out! When we work at a high intensity, even after a long low intensity work out, our bodies will automatically revert back to using CARBS instead of FATS, that's why we need lots of CARBS and enough FATS in order to train our best.

After training we need to replace our lost carbohydrates, and help our body to recover and repair by eating plenty of PROTEIN rich foods. Protein is mainly used to help repair our muscles after the stresses of training have taken place on them. Therefore after training we need to eat lots of PROTEINS to help us adapt to the training demands.

Also, after training our body has used up lots of special VITAMINS and MINERALS to create amino acids, which help supply our energy during training. To help replace these VITAMINS and MINERALS we need to eat lots of vegetables and fruit, green and leafy vegetables are especially good in replacing lost VITAMINS and MINERALS. If we do not replace these minerals then training will be hampered, our energy systems will not be able to work as effectively as before.

HOW MUCH CARBOHYDRATES, FATS AND PROTEINS IS THE RIGHT AMOUNT?

Swimmers require different amounts of each food group according to their own individual size and age. As a generalised amount, **before training** our main meal which should be eaten between 2 and 4 hours prior to training should constitute to around **70% CARBOHYDRATE - 20% FAT -10% PROTEIN**. **After training** this generalised formula should change to around **60% CARBOHYDRATE - 10 % FAT - 30% PROTEIN**. The meal after training needs to eaten as soon as possible, but at least 30mins after to an hour after the session has ended.

We need to ensure that FAT intake is kept to minimum, saturated fats within food cause us to put weight on, in the form of fatty tissue. Swimmers need to monitor weight and ensure levels of fat on the body are kept to a minimum. Carrying excess weight will take up more energy, and cause more resistance in the water. An increase in excess body fat can cause a decline in flexibility.

The best way to eat your food is in main meals and in the form of snacks. Overeating will waste parts of the food, and overeating particular food groups will not result in increased levels of particular food group. For example the body can only absorb and store so much carbohydrate in the body, the excess will leave the body as waste or used otherwise.

HOW MUCH FLUID INTAKE DO I NEED?

All swimmers need to be drinking water based cordial or just plain water before, during and after training. Approximately an hour before, all through the session and up to 2 hours after training, water intake needs to be regular sips at intervals of up to every 10-20mins if possible. During the session approximately 1 litre of water should be consumed and a further litre after training to replace the lost water in the session. During a session we lose fluids through sweating and respiration, as we breathe we lose water upon exhalation.