



EVERTON SWIMMING ASSOCIATION

NUTRITION FOR SWIMMERS

Swimming events can last anything from 20 seconds to 15 minutes. Swimming is therefore a highly anaerobic sport, with aerobic metabolism becoming more important as the race distance increases.

Although each event may be brief, swim meets are usually held over one full day or the weekend, with swimmers typically competing in heats in the mornings and finals in the evening, or many events are heat declared winners. In most meets, swimmers may enter a large number of events and be required to swim a number of times in one day with 20 minutes to several hours between races.

So, the most important thing to consider is timing: what you can eat and drink and at what times.

What should I eat during the week leading up to the meet?

- Ensure a high carbohydrate eating plan.
- Include more rice and pasta. About 70% of the calories in your diet should come from carbohydrates leading up to the event (at least 55%)
- Include nutritious carbohydrate snacks in-between meals. Cereal bars are excellent. They are high in carbohydrate and easy to put in your packed lunch.
- Eating the right balance of increase carbohydrate and less fat is the key.

What should I eat for the Pre-Event Meal?

The pre-event meal is a mini nutrition period that occurs in the 2-3 hours before the start of a meet, usually the Breakfast. Most swimmers don't understand the exact role of the pre-event meal and eat as much carbohydrates as possible to top-up energy stores. It has little effect on increasing muscle glycogen levels.

Remember, to be able to perform well you usually need the stores of glycogen in your muscles to be full. It is the foods eaten during the week leading up to the meet that establishes the muscle glycogen levels. By meet day, glycogen levels are most "set" and there is little that you can do to increase them in the hours before competition.

What do I need to take after the Warm up?

These simple guidelines will guide you through recovery after the warm-up and prepare you for the heats.

- Replace fluids immediately after the warm-up.
- Fill your drinks bottle with water (approximately 500ml) and drink all of it!
- Sports drinks have their benefits as they replace fluids and carbohydrate simultaneously, but make sure they are Isotonic (not higher than 8% concentration) as this will affect how quickly they are absorbed. Most of the leading commercial sports drinks are isotonic.
- If there is more than 1 hour between the warm-up and your first heat, try to eat a little. Something like a banana will stop you feeling hungry and give you more energy.
- The best approach is to eat a little and often during the day in between events.
- Eating too much at once can make you feel heavy and lethargic.

What should I be drinking in between events?

Right before an event, it's best not to snack or drink. You do not want to start swimming with a stomach full of anything.

- Have a drink about 15 minutes prior to the event. This will allow enough time for it to be absorbed.
- In longer breaks of at least 90 minutes have something to eat as well as some fluids.
- In shorter breaks, use a sports drink or water to replace fluid.
- The indoor pool environment is humid and dehydrating, so **DRINK, DRINK, DRINK!!** Keep drinking throughout the day to keep your blood and energy pumping. It is recommended to drink about 500 ml every hour. However, due to the warm environment this may be more.
- Do not wait until you are thirsty until you start drinking. Once you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated.
- IMPORTANT! 2% dehydration leads to as much as a 10-20% decrease in performance!

For short sprint events (25 – 100m)

- Consume a sports drink about 15 – 20 minutes before the first event. This provides glucose which enters the bloodstream quickly giving you a fast boost of energy.
- Breakfast - Eat this meal about 2 – 3 hours before the warm-up (this is the ideal but might be hard when warm-up is at 8.30 am!)

This meal should top-up your blood sugar levels after the night's rest. The meal should not have to be large, but should fill you up for the next few hours.

High carbohydrate foods are the best options e.g. breads, cereals, fruit, pasta, rice, though you probably won't want to eat pasta for breakfast!

- Ensure that the meal is low fat; fat takes too long to digest.
- Useful drinks to have sports drink, juice or simply water.
- Drink about 500 -1000ml of water about 1 hour before the warm-up to 'top up' your hydration levels.
- Avoid the caffeine in cola drinks, coffee, chocolate, and tea – it dehydrates you.
- If you feel too nervous to eat, try a liquid meal such as a fruit smoothie.
- Practice with our pre-event meal in the days prior to the meet to find out what you will be eating. This will allow you to know whether it fills you up enough, and whether it tastes good!

What can I have for Breakfast?

Do's

- Eat cereals like oatmeal or oat bran.
- Select whole grain or high fibre cereals.
- Eat breads such as toast or bagels.
- Try mil, skimmed or low fat is best.
- Choose fruit, including fresh fruit and fruit juices.
- One egg with some toast.
- Choose fat free toppings like syrups and jams as an alternative to butter.

Don'ts

- Have a full fry-up including sausage, ham or bacon.
- Have too many eggs, concentrate more on having carbohydrates rather than protein.
- Have high sugar children's cereals. They will give you a quick fix.
- Have fast food breakfast sandwiches. They contain too much fat which takes longer to digest. This will make you feel "stuffed" and lazy in the pool.
- Use too much margarine or butter.

And most importantly.....DON'T skip breakfast!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Swimming on an empty stomach makes you feel like you have no energy.



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