



Nutritional Advice for Competitive Swimmers & Parents



We at Denbigh Dragons understand that we are not Olympians (yet) and our swimmers are human but we take training and competition seriously in order to provide our swimmers with opportunity to build their confidence, improve their times, feel success and reach their goals.

We all have a part to play in this process whether as a Parent, Swimmer or Coach.

It is the parents who pay swimmer membership fees; the ones who sit through hours of training each week, the ones who transport swimmers to and from training/competition and the biggest supporters for the swimmers to perform to their best and gain the ultimate experience.

The swimmer trains week in week out, getting up early morning and rushing back to training after school in order to refine their skills and technique in preparation for competition. They are the ones who try so hard to work towards their goals, try their hardest to get their times down and swim faster, but ultimately attempt to impress all of those around them with their ability and make these proud.

The Coach spends relentless hours planning, preparing, reviewing and delivering training programmes/sessions for the swimmers. The Coach is by the swimmers side week in week out motivating them to help them develop and work towards their competition goals. These goals could be to attempt a new event, improve a PB time or gain a medal.

All of this pain staking hard work by all involved can be undone simply by what swimmers fuel themselves with both pre-competition and during competition.

“GOOD NUTRITION WILL NOT MAKE A WORLD CLASS SWIMMER BUT POOR EATING HABITS MAY PREVENT THOSE FROM REACHING GOALS”.

For example, the energy stored within the swimmer to push an extra 0.02 seconds quicker in a race can be the difference between 4th and Bronze, Bronze and Silver or even Silver and Gold. There is a fine line between overall results in swimming and fuelling correctly for the event can be the difference.

WHAT'S THE LINK BETWEEN WHAT YOU EAT AND SWIMMING?

Energy and being able to keep going during a race are the most important factors in achieving your best performance. Our bodies create energy from the food we eat – by breaking down the different components of food – carbohydrates, proteins and fat.

Carbohydrates are the most important nutrients for swimmers as this is what makes energy in your body. During training (within 90 minutes) the body's energy stores are empty; therefore swimmers need more carbohydrates than a normal person.

A swimmer's diet is based on a healthy diet with a few differences. As a swimmer the role of your diet is not just to keep you healthy but also to meet the extra needs your body has due to the extra training you do. What you eat will affect your ability to train, recover between training sessions and compete. So to achieve a well-balanced diet to lead a healthy life and to give you that extra edge for your swimming it is the basic nutrients that are important and the amounts and balances of these nutrients that you eat.

All foods give us energy and it is the most important consideration because if your body runs out of energy you will start to **slow down** in the pool and feel very tired. You are also still growing and your body uses a lot of energy just to do that, so that energy on top of the energy you need to swim and the energy you need to get you through a day at school means you need to be eating a lot! As mentioned earlier the best source of energy for when you exercise comes from **carbohydrates**.



CARBOHYDRATES

For swimming this is the most important nutrient because it is the easiest way to get the energy you need to move and swim faster. Carbohydrates come in two forms – simple and complex. Complex carbohydrates are the better source as they provide the best source of energy for exercise because the energy they give is released slowly throughout the day. The simple carbohydrates give you a quick energy burst. Carbohydrates should make up just over half of the food on your dinner plate.

FOOD SOURCES OF COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES

- Rice
- Breakfast cereals
- Pasta & noodles
- Potatoes
- Pizza bases
- Crisp breads, oatcakes & rice cakes
- Sweetcorn (avoid melted butter) & popcorn Beans (inc baked)
- Peas & lentils

FOOD SOURCES OF SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES

- Sugar/jam/honey/chocolate spread
- Fruit (fresh, canned, dried & juice)
- Chocolate & cereal bars
- Sweets (jelly babies, jelly beans)
- Cakes
- Buns
- Biscuits
- Puddings
- Yogurts
- Soft Drinks
- Sports Drinks

PROTEIN

The second aim in achieving a good athlete's diet is to eat the right amounts of protein. Protein can be found in foods such as meat, fish, peas, beans and dairy products i.e. cheese, eggs. This part of your diet is important because: It helps repairs your body after training, helps you grow properly and helps your muscles get stronger. Protein is not as important as carbohydrates for swimmers but you still need some protein foods in your diet every day. Make sure the protein sources you eat are lean and low in fat.

FAT

Remember that high fat diets aren't good for anyone, especially swimmers. When you are training and competing eating a lot of fatty foods such as pies, sausage rolls, fast food, deep fried food can make you feel full and uncomfortable and can hamper your performance, this is especially important during competition. Another negative aspect of high fat diets is that the high fat foods make it difficult for you to meet the high carbohydrate requirements because you would usually choose fatty foods over carbohydrates. Also these fatty foods take much longer to be broken down by the body so they are not a suitable source of instant energy for competition days.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES

Fruit and vegetables give you all the vitamins and minerals your body needs to work properly and to its full potential. Calcium, iron and zinc are especially important for growth and to help your immune system fight off infections. A portion of fruit is an apple, 2 plums, a pear, glass of fruit juice for example. A portion of vegetables is two spoonfuls of peas or carrots, two – three florets of broccoli for example. Remember frozen vegetables count, so no excuses!



FLUID

Contrary to popular belief swimmers do sweat – just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there! The atmosphere in most swimming pools is very hot and humid and these conditions can lead very easily to dehydration. So you are losing fluid/water all the time and you must replace it. Being dehydrated affects your coordination, concentration and reduces the length of time you can keep swimming for.

GOLDEN RULE: DRINKING LITTLE AND OFTEN AND BEFORE THIRST SETS IN IS THE KEY TO STAYING WELL HYDRATED.

Dehydration Check

An easy test that you can do is the 'pee test'. This involves looking at your urine – if you're going to the toilet regularly, producing lots of urine and it is clear in colour then you are well hydrated. If you are not going often and the urine is dark in colour, smelly and not much of it then dehydration has set in and you need to get drinking!! And remember being thirsty is a poor sign of dehydration – by the time you feel thirsty your body is already dehydrated. So don't wait until you are thirsty to drink – it's too late by then. So make sure you drink before training and throughout the training session – always take your bottle on to the poolside and leave it at the end of the lane and take sips whenever you can. Carry on drinking after the session – make sure you have enough drinks with you. It is also especially important throughout a competition – even if you are just watching your other team mates swim!

PUTTING IT ALL INTO PRACTICE

Many swimmers will follow this eating pattern - Snack before early morning training, drinking during & after training, breakfast within one hour of finishing training, mid-morning snack, 'Light' meal at lunchtime, pre-training snack mid-afternoon, drinking during & after training, dinner Small snack before bed.

SAMPLE DAYS MENU

BREAKFAST Glass of fruit juice or piece of fresh fruit i.e. grapefruit Breakfast cereal with semi skimmed milk 2 slices wholemeal toast with spread and jam/honey Snack Fruit or yogurt or cereal bar

LUNCH 2 wholemeal rolls or sandwiches filled with lean meat, cheese, or tuna with salad and spread Packet low fat crisps Piece fruitcake Yogurt

PRE-TRAINING SNACK Breakfast cereal with semi skimmed milk Crumpet/ toast/ raisin bread/ fruit loaf/ bagels with spread, jam, honey or peanut butter

POST TRAINING SNACK 2 biscuits i.e. digestives, slice raisin bread or cereal bar Drink

DINNER Lean meat or fish Starchy carbohydrates – rice/ pasta/ potatoes/ noodles Vegetables Dessert – rice pudding/ fruit with ice cream

SUPPER Toast with spread Warm milky drink

So snacking is important!

What kinds of snacks are good for you?

Toast, Breakfast, cereals, Teacakes, scones, Scotch pancakes, Malt loaf, Fruit, Dried fruit, Bread sticks/rice cakes, Pop tarts / rusks, Energy bars, Popcorn, Milkshakes Banana, jam/honey, chocolate spread sandwiches.