

Nutrition preparation for swimming competitions

Preparing for a swimming event in which you'll be racing several times in one day requires a well-planned nutrition strategy. Ensuring your fuel (glycogen) stores are fully stocked and your body properly hydrated will help you put in your best performance.

2 weeks before

- If you will be racing early in the morning, change your eating times to reflect this.
- **Practice** your competition-day eating strategy in training prior to putting it in place.
- As your training volume drops, you should also **adjust your food** (calorie) intake to match your energy expenditure - otherwise you may end up with unwanted last minute weight gain

The Week before

- Eating a **balanced diet** is really all you need to do during the last week: protein, carbs, fats, fruit + veg
- Focus on the **nutritional quality** (nutrient-density) of your diet by minimising sugar and refined carbohydrates.
- **Carbohydrate loading is not relevant** for most swimming competitions unless you plan to swim continuously for more than 2 - 3 hours

The day before

You need to plan your meals and snacks carefully, and keep properly hydrated. Take your own food and drink for the journey.

- Stick to **plain and familiar foods!** Avoid anything you don't normally eat; spicy foods, beans, fibrous veg (unless you are used to eating them) as they may cause gas and bloating
- Make sure that you keep yourself **hydrated** by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Your urine should be pale yellow.
- Have **small meals** every 2 – 4 hours for efficient glycogen fuelling. Avoid big meals or over-eating during the evening otherwise you may feel lethargic the next day.

Competition day

2 - 4 hours pre-event:

- Drink **350 - 500 ml of water**, cordial, squash or diluted fruit juice, then another 125–250 ml just before the race.
- Schedule your **pre-race meal** approximately 2 – 4 hours before the race start time.

Pre-event meals

- ✓ Porridge with honey
- ✓ Banana and yoghurt
- ✓ Toast with honey, plus milk
- ✓ Eggs on toast
- ✓ Cereal (low fibre) with fruit and milk

Between events

- Remember: **don't eat anything that you haven't tried** during training.
- Try to **eat and drink as soon as possible** after your heat, allowing a couple of hours between eating and swimming.
- Take **frequent drinks** of water or, if you cannot face solid food, have sports drinks or diluted cordial so at least you'll get the carbohydrate you need.
- ✓ Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt

Light meals

If you will be racing later in the day, schedule a mini meal or lunch 2 – 4 hours before the start. It should be rich in carbohydrate and also contain protein.

- ✓ Pasta or rice – add any combination of veg (peppers, tomatoes, cucumber, sweetcorn), nuts, tuna, chicken, cheese.
- ✓ Sandwiches, wraps, rolls, pitta with chicken; tuna; cheese; peanut butter.

After the event

Your preparation for your next day's events starts the moment the previous one has finished. So you must re-fuel and rehydrate as soon as possible.

- Have at least 2 cups (250 - 500 ml) of water within 30 minutes of finishing your event. If you are dehydrated (check your urine), a sports drink or diluted juice with a pinch of added salt will help to rehydrate you faster.
- Kick-start your recovery by eating a carbohydrate-protein snack within 30 minutes after your event – this increases glycogen storage and helps muscles repair faster.
- Your dinner should contain carbohydrate and protein as well as some fat. Try pasta with chicken and vegetables or a jacket potato with tuna and ratatouille. Avoid the temptation to feast on fast foods.

Fuelling and Hydration Race Day Strategy

	Hydration	Fuel needs	Suitable foods
2 - 4 h before the event	Drink 5 – 7 ml / kg (approx 350 – 500ml water)	Eat 2 – 4g carbs/ kg (approx 100 – 200g)	Eggs on toast ; Porridge with bananas, raisins and honey; Cereal with milk and bananas; Toast, fruit & milk
Warm up			
Post-warm up	100 – 200 ml	Eat 1 g carbs/ kg (approx 50 – 70g)	Water, squash, sports drink Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt
Race			
Between events	Drink approx 100 – 250ml immediately after race, and then little and often	Eat 1 g carbs/ kg (approx 50 – 70g)	Water, squash or sports drink Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt
After the event	Drink 750ml/ 0.5kg weight loss	Eat a small snack with a 3:1 ratio of carbs to protein	Flavoured milk; milk & flapjack; recovery drink, sandwich & yoghurt