

Eat to Compete

Food is the body's fuel, keeping it running efficiently for training and competitions, BUT it needs the best fuel possible, or our body will become tired and unable to work to its full potential.

Essential Nutritional Needs:

Carbohydrates	Water
Fats	Vitamins
Protein	Minerals

Carbohydrates are the main food group for energy – easily digested and stored in the form of glycogen in the muscles and the liver.

There are two forms of Carbohydrate foods: - Simple Carbohydrates (Sugar) – fast energy but depletes at around 2 hours.
Complex Carbohydrates (Starch) – sustains longer lasting energy levels

- Exercise lowers glycogen stores – eat carbohydrates to boost levels.
- Complex Carbohydrates – gradual energy supply over a long period
- Simple Carbohydrates – initial energy boost, depleted quickly.

Swimmers should aim to 80% of Carbohydrate intake from starchy foods (pasta and rice) to maintain glycogen levels and boost energy for training and competition.

Carbohydrate Groups and Foods

Complex Carbohydrates (sustained rise in energy levels)	Simple Carbohydrates (fast rise and fall in energy levels)
Bread and Cereals	Sweets
Pasta and Rice	Glucose Tablets
Potatoes	Glucose Tablets
Sweet corn	Honey/Jam
Beans	Sugar Coated Cereal

Drink

Very important part of the diet, especially for an athlete. Water rehydrates when the body sweats, regulating body temperature and circulation of the body's blood.

What drink is best?

Squash/diluted fruit juice	Water
Glucose drinks (slipped slowly as they cause an instant energy and lead to a drop in energy levels).	

Drink as little as possible:

Fizzy drinks	Caffeine drinks – e.g. Coffee, alcohol, diet coke.
--------------	--

When to drink:

Always drink BEFORE you feel thirsty	Aim to drink 200ml every 20 minutes during training.
Little and Often – especially during training.	Before and after training.

Why is a good diet important before competition?

- To maximise storage of glycogen (provided by carbohydrates) – which helps to prevent fatigue.
- To keep body fully hydrated – drink little and often
- Maintain healthy eating at competitions – take a bag of food and drinks to maintain glycogen levels. Try to eat food, which is familiar.

Taper Period

Carbohydrate intake should be increased prior to competition. Decrease fat intake to prevent weight gain. Eat little and often – drink plenty

Typical foods to eat –

Cereal, low-fat milk	Add extra rice and pasta
Increase potatoes, reduce meat and fish	Jacket potato – low fat filling

Night before Competition

High Carbohydrate, low fat diet, lots of fluid

Typical foods to eat –

Rice/Pasta, low fat sauce	Increase potatoes, reduce meat and fish
Beans on toast	Jacket potatoes – low fat filling
Cereal and Toast	

Pre-Event

High Carbohydrate, low fat – plenty of fluids.

- Need to keep glycogen stores topped up and maintain hydration.
- Big meals require 3-4 hours to digest
- Lighter meals require 1-2 hours to digest

Typical Foods to eat

Toast	Beans of Toast
Cereal, low-fat milk	Pasta, Low fat sauce
Banana	Jacket Potato – low fat filling
Jam sandwich	

Between Races

2-4 hours before race –

Sandwiches/Bagels/toasted sandwiches	Popcorn
Cereal	Jacket potato
Canned/dried fruit	Rice/pasta

Less than one hour before a race

Soft drinks – diluted fruit juice/cordial	Plain Biscuits
Sports drinks	Jelly cubes
Banana	Raisins
Energy Bars	

Post Competition

High carbohydrate intake to refuel body, adding fruit and vegetables. Drink lots

**To sum up – Improve your performance by;
Eating lots of carbohydrates before and during competition period.
Drink plenty – before, between races and after competition.**