

ABC'S OF NUTRITION

With so much information floating around on the web today, it's easy to get lost in the "how-to's" and "hacks" of nutrition. Rather than always asking "what's new?" with nutrition, we need to also be asking "what's old?". We get it. Mastering the basics is not exactly attractive. Everyone wants the next shiny thing that will catapult them to success. The reality is, the basics are what keep us moving forward toward our goals, or hold us back. So whether you're an age group or senior swimmer, the ABC's of nutrition are for you!

A – AMOUNT

One of the pillars of good nutrition for swimmers is eating enough to fuel performance and stay healthy. Check out [Performance Gains](#) for an estimate of where to start.

Some signs that you ARE eating enough:

- Feeling energized throughout the day

- Feeling energized at practice

- Mental clarity + focus

- Not sick or injured very often

- Proper growth

- Steady mood

- Regular menstrual cycle for females

Some warning signs you may NOT be eating enough:

- Feeling fatigued often

- Trouble concentrating
- Recurring sickness or injury
- Unintentional weight loss
- Decreased endurance and strength
- Depression, irritability, or mood changes
- Irregular or loss of menstrual cycle for females

B – BIG NUTRIENTS

The three “big” or “macro” nutrients are carbohydrates, protein, and fat. They are ALL important for your health and performance, they just have different jobs.

What do carbs do?

Carbs are your main fuel source for intense activity and long practices. They give you energy to swim fast!

Where do I get carbs?

Some carbs are used quickly, while others are not. Both fast and slow carbs are useful for the swim athlete. Most of the foods you eat should revolve around slow carbs with fiber, however, fast carbs with little to no fiber can be helpful right before/after exercise.

FAST carb examples:

- Fruit gummies
- Sports drinks

- White breads/rice/pastas

- Fruit pouches

- Energy bars

- Some cereals

SLOW carb examples:

- Whole fruits and vegetables

- Oats

- Whole/sprouted grain breads/rice/pastas

- Quinoa

- Beans and lentils

What does protein do?

Protein helps you recover, grow, and build muscle.

Where do I get protein?

Most of your protein should be from foods that are complete. This means that they have all of the building blocks necessary to make new proteins. A variety of incomplete proteins (in addition to complete sources) will also help you reach your daily protein needs.

COMPLETE Proteins

- Beef, chicken, fish, pork

-Eggs

-Milk (regular or soy)

-Greek/Icelandic yogurt, kefir

-Cottage cheese, other cheeses

-Edamame

-Tempeh, tofu

OTHER Proteins

-Nuts (cashews, peanuts, almonds, pecans, pistachios, etc.)

-Seeds (chia, hemp, flax, sunflower, pumpkin, etc.)

-Nut and seed butters

-Beans, lentils, chickpeas

What do fats do?

Fats keep you healthy and energized throughout the day.

Where do I get fats?

-Nuts/seeds

-Fish

-Full-fat dairy (cheese, milk, yogurt, etc.)

-Avocadoes

-Coconut

-Olives

-Oils and dressings (avocado, olive, walnut, canola, etc.)

C – CHOICES

Unless you're responsible for all of your own grocery shopping and cooking, your nutrition choices are partially dependent on what's around the house and placed on the table. That's why it's KEY to team up with your parents/guardians and make sure you are all on the same page! Along with the information on the SSDL Nutrition Tab, a sports nutrition coach or sports RD can be a valuable part of your support system as well.

Choose VARIETY.

Getting lots of different types of carbs, protein, and fats will help you get the big and small nutrients you need. If you find something you like, that's great. Think about how you can mix it up each week. For example, if you love Greek yogurt, try it on whole-grain waffles with banana or as part of a berry yogurt bowl with granola.

Choose COLOR.

The only time you will likely need to limit your colorful foods is close to exercise. Otherwise, get in as many fruits and veggies as you can! Check out [The Performance Plate Method](#) to see how colorful foods fit within training and meet days.

Choose FUN!

Fueling doesn't have to be boring. And it doesn't have to be hard! If you don't like a food the first time, think of how you can make it more fun. Hate spinach? Add into a smoothie! Big fan of pizza, but not sure about veggies? Try adding some cooked bell peppers or mushrooms! Check out the Recipes on the Nutrition tab for more inspiration.

