

# Top Tips for Feeding Teen Swimmers

By Chris Rosenbloom, PhD, RD, CSSD 5/14/2013



USASwimming.org nutrition contributor, Jill Castle, recently published “Fearless Feeding: How to Raise Healthy Eaters from High Chair to High School” (Jossey-Bass publisher, 2013), and I asked her to offer her top tips for feeding teen swimmers. Many of our readers are looking for sound nutrition advice with practical tips for families of active swimmers and this book is the go-to source.

## **With parents and teen athletes on different schedules, how can the family eat meals together so that mom and dad aren’t short order cooks?**

“Start by checking everyone’s schedule for the week, and I’ll bet you can find at least two or three meals the whole family can enjoy together,” says Castle.

It might be breakfast or a weekend dinner, but look for opportunities to eat together. Plan the menu and announce the plan to your family. Tell them they are expected to be present, and if plans change, Castle suggests a pre-plated meal for the absent person that can be reheated in the microwave or oven.

## **How can parents limit fast food consumption?**

Castle suggests several strategies to curb unhealthy fast food choices. First, help your teen learn about healthier fast food items so he can make good choices most of the time. Visit the restaurant’s website or download an app to encourage choosing grilled items, yogurt parfaits, wraps or egg sandwiches. Second, have healthy, quick items within easy reach in your fridge. Yogurt, smoothies, low-fat milk, veggies and dip, and mixed fruit cups should be grab-and-go items for teens,” Castle says. In addition, keep trail mix, nuts, and dried fruit available for quick after practice snacks.

## **What can a parent do to get a teenage girl to get adequate calcium if she won’t drink milk?**

If your teen doesn’t drink milk, look for other good sources of calcium that she will include in

her diet. Castle suggests calcium-fortified orange juice, yogurt smoothies, cheese, pudding or ice cream. Other calcium-rich foods include almonds, soy nuts, tofu and cooked greens. Also consider why your teen won't drink milk. Is it lactose intolerance or another issue? Soy milk, rice milk and almond milk are all fortified with calcium, and your teen might like these alternatives better than dairy milk.

**With heavy practice schedules and schoolwork, how can parents help swimmers get enough calories?**

"Structure a meal and snack plan," Castle says. The plan should include 3 meals and 3 snacks each day. Experiment with free phone apps that help athletes track food intake, and set the phone to beep for reminders to eat throughout the day. Castle recommends powerhouse foods that contain both carbohydrate and protein for pre- and post-workout snacks to refuel tired muscles. "Peanut butter on whole grain bread, a banana and a cheese stick" contain high quality nutrients for fueling.

For more information on Castle's book, see

<http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-111830859X,descCd-buy.html>

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