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GROWING SWIMMERS MAY NEED A 4TH MEAL

10/13/2015



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Swimmers can burn a lot of calories in the pool. More time in the pool translates to more calories burned. Depending on the stage of growth, such as in the adolescent growth spurt, the need for calories to ensure normal growth and development while also covering the nutritional needs for swimming may be quite high.

Some swimmers find it difficult to get enough calories in the day. This can lead to lackluster performance, fatigue, and even low body weight. Although there can be many different reasons for these complaints— for example, inadequate hydration, low iron intake, or lack of sleep—missing out on enough calories during the day can certainly be a contributor.

Healthy snacks are one strategy that can help the swimmer ensure sufficient calories to meet his needs for health and sport. However, a snack may not be enough for the teen who requires significantly more calories than an elementary or a middle-school athlete.

Here's where the 4th meal comes in.

Higher in calories and representing several food groups, the 4th meal is literally like eating another scheduled meal during the day. Rather than an endless bowlful of popcorn or two helpings of cereal with milk, the 4th meal (served when there's plenty of time for digestion, such as after school) may be a substantial and nutritious option for the swimmer with higher calorie requirements.

Try to rotate some of these 4th meal ideas into your swimmer's nutrition plan, especially if "snacks" are growing in size and frequency:

Leftovers. If you have dinner leftovers, pull them out the next day and reheat them for a hearty 4th meal. Some suggestions:

- Pasta with sauce
- Leftover beef or chicken, and rice
- Casserole such as lasagna, and fruit



Breakfast foods. Eggs, waffles and oatmeal are a fast and easy option as a 4th meal. Try these:

- Scrambled eggs in a tortilla with cheese and salsa
- Egg sandwich with ham and cheese on an English muffin
- Sautee eggs into leftover rice and chopped vegetables for a fried rice dish
- Waffles layered with peanut butter, banana and a drizzle of honey; milk
- Oatmeal topped with nuts, dried fruit, and milk



Sandwiches. When time is tight, make a sandwich (or pack) and rotate different types to keep it interesting.

- Panini with mozzarella, pesto, tomato, and fruit
- Grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup
- PBJ sandwich and a banana
- Deli sub including lean meat, cheese, and veggies



Stews or hearty soups. Especially when the chill sets in, a soup can take the edge off of the cold, and fill up a hungry belly. Here are some good options:

- Chili (beef or vegetarian variety) with cornbread or other type of bread
- Beef stew with bread or crackers
- Vegetable barley soup and peanut butter toast

Baked potatoes. Zap these in the microwave and stuff them with lots of nutritious goodies.

- Southwestern-style: Load it with cheese, salsa, guacamole and/or sour cream
- Veggie-style: Top a potato with broccoli and cheese
- Pizza-style: Crust not necessary! Add pizza sauce, mozzarella cheese, and chopped turkey pepperoni



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