



Pre-Meet Warm-Up

This week's Speedo Tip of the Week comes from Deb Whitney, USA Swimming's Physiology Coordinator. Whitney offers some advice on the pre-meet warm-up.

Whitney's Tip:

Warm-up should prepare your body both physically and mentally for racing. During warm-up, you get your body ready for the intense, maximal efforts of competition. Your heart rate, blood circulation and muscle temperature increases, and your body functions become more efficient. Warm-up also allows you to become familiar with the features of the pool such as lighting, depth, crowd noise, walls, backstroke flags and starting blocks.

Typically, warm-up lasts between 20 and 60 minutes, but how long and how intense a swimmer does his or her warm-up is highly individual and can vary depending on age, distance orientation, past experience, personal preference and water and air temperature. A swimmer should consider what has worked for him or her in the past.

The warm-up can be broken into four steps. The first step involves 5 to 10 minutes of light stretching to loosen muscles. This stretching should involve the major muscle groups and joints. The second step should be directly related to the swimmer's events and should start with some easy swimming for 10 to 20 minutes, which may include kicking, drills, pulling, etc. Moderate to high-intensity swimming at race pace should follow the easy swimming to practice technique, improve the feel of water, increase blood circulation and raise body temperature. Usually, sprinters do more repeats of shorter distances at a higher intensity with more rest. Distance swimmers usually do fewer repeats of longer distances at a lower intensity with less rest. The third step should include rehearsing starts and turns, examining the walls and pool depth, etc. The fourth and final step should be 5 to 10 minutes of easy warm down to help clear any lactic acid that may have accumulated during warm-up.

The warm-up should end about 15 to 20 minutes before the race. If the time between the warm-up and the race is much longer, the benefits of warm-up may decrease. In order to maintain the benefits of warm-up, light stretching or easy exercise can help increase blood circulation, heart rate and body temperature.