

Invisible Training for Invincible Swimmers

I. Sleep

- A. Most children and teenagers need at least 8 hours/night; some, especially those in heavy training, may need 9 or 10
 - 1. Go to bed and arise at the same time on weekends to maintain sleep cycle
 - 2. If you sleep poorly on consecutive nights, talk to your coach about omitting a morning practice (one good practice is better than two mediocre ones and you will do better in school too)
 - 3. In the long term, you must learn to manage your time wisely in order to get to bed early

II. Diet

A. Drink

- 1. Bring a water bottle to practice and drink frequently
- 2. What you drink to rehydrate:
 - a. Water is the best thirst quencher, and the US has the best tap water of any country—use it
 - b. If using a sports drink, dilute with at least equal volumes of water
 - c. Consider a carbohydrate replacement drink if you're bonking during practice
- 3. What you drink at meals:
 - a. Skim milk is a good source of protein and vitamin D (aids Ca²⁺ absorption)
 - b. If you must have sweet, drink diluted fruit juice and avoid soda
 - c. Avoid coffee: if you need sleep, change your schedule to provide it

B. Food

- 1. General guidelines for healthy eating
 - a. Make changes gradually
 - b. Don't deny yourself everything you crave
 - c. Devise a healthy, performance-oriented diet that is practical and sustainable
 - d. No one meal is critical; the overall balance is
 - e. There is no perfect meet food or diet; eat what you usually do
 - f. Eat a wide variety of foods with special emphasis on
 - (1) Whole grains (wheat, corn, rice, barley; e.g., Grape Nuts or Shredded Wheat, not Cocoa Puffs)
 - (2) Lean meats, fowl, and fish (especially salmon)
 - (3) Legumes
 - (4) Fresh fruits and vegetables (steaming veggies retains most nutrients)
 - f. Avoid or minimize consumption of the following
 - (1) Processed or packaged foods
 - (2) Condiments including salt, sugar, mayonnaise, and butter
 - (3) Fast food
 - (4) Candy
 - (5) Fatty meats
 - g. Relish your carbs (see II.B.1.e.(a) above)—no carbs = no zip
 - h. Anchor meals with some protein/unsaturated fat
 - i. Cook with unsaturated liquid vegetable oils (e.g., olive or Canola oil) if possible
 - (1) Avoid animal fats and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils
- 2. Planning a daily, performance-oriented diet (especially important for those doing double practices)
 - a. Eat 5-6 small meals/day rather than 3 large meals; an example is shown below
 - (1) 400-500 kcal of mostly complex carbohydrates within an hour a.m. practice
 - (2) Mid-morning snack of another 500 kcals

- (3) Balanced lunch--800-1000 kcals
- (4) Pre-practice snack—300-400 kcals
- (5) Balanced dinner—1000 kcals
- (6) Pre-bed snack—300-400 kcals

b. Increase baseline intakes shown below by 400-800 kcal for every hour of practice (swimmers doing doubles should be eating vast quantities of nutrient-rich, calorically undense food)

- (1) Kids 7-10—2000 kcal/day
- (2) Girls 11-18—2500
- (3) Boys 11-14—2500
- (4) Boys 15-18—3000

- c. Lower intake accordingly when on reduced training, taper, or break
- d. Bring food with you—don't rely on vending machines or vendors

III. Mental/emotional inputs

A. General guidelines

1. Winning is not the criterion of success; striving to win is
 - a. It is the process--not the product--that stimulates growth
 - b. Honor your competitors, for without them, you will not reach your potential
 - c. Focus not on the score, but on your effort to affect that score
 - d. Following are a few of the many ways you can win in swimming regardless of your place in the race
 - (1) Improve your effort
 - (2) Improve your health
 - (3) Improve your fitness
 - (4) Improve your technique
 - (5) Improve your times
 - (6) Try to win your heat
 - (7) Participate in the team cheer
 - (8) Swim your relays as if they are the Olympics
 - (9) Score points for your team
 - (10) Encourage your teammates
 - (11) Make a new friend
 - (12) Compliment a competitor
 - (13) Thank a race official, meet volunteer, or coach
 - (14) Embrace a challenge
 - (15) Tackle a new event
 - (16) Try a different pacing strategy such as negative-splitting a distance race
2. Swim in your own lane
 - a. By striving to be the first to the wall, you extract more from yourself; do not make winning a race or beating a particular individual the sole criterion of your success
 - b. Set reasonable goals that account for your abilities, ambitions, and improvement rate
 - c. Focus on what you have achieved, not on what you haven't
 - d. Don't be discouraged if you don't reach a goal; striving brings you closer than you would otherwise have been

B. Self-talk

1. Practice thought-stopping whenever you find yourself discounting your own abilities or playing some version of the "I can't" game
2. Replace such negative self-talk with messages affirming what you have accomplished