

Tips to Improve Athletic Performance through Healthy Choices

The food your athlete puts in their body is a critical part of their success in any sport. Swimming is a challenging sport where the athlete is engaged in physical, aerobic activity for one to three hours (depending on the age, ability, and experience level). To maintain this level of activity, the athlete needs specific things to maximize their time and efforts. The following are some of the critical things your athlete needs:

- **Drinks:** water is the best way to stay hydrated. If the activity is more than 60 minutes, we recommend supplementing water with a sports drink. Many sports drinks have excessive amounts of sugar that are not good for your athlete. The best way to deal with this is to mix the sport drink with water (half and half). This way they get some of the electrolytes they need without the sugar.
 - General Rule of Thumb: 8 oz of water for every 15 minutes of practice
- **Before Practice or Swim Meet:** The emphasis is fluid, carbohydrates, and a little protein. Here are some specific suggestions for your athlete 30 minutes prior to swimming:
 - Whole-grain ready-to-eat cereal with low-fat or skim milk
 - Low-fat fruit flavored yogurt
 - Peanut butter on whole wheat toast and 1/2 apple
 - Lean meat on pita bread with ½ cup orange juice
 - Graham or animal crackers and a box of raisins
 - Low-fat frozen yogurt and 100% grape juice
 - Oatmeal raisin cookie and low fat milk
 - Low-fat pudding Bagel and 100% apple juice
- **After Practice or Swim Meet:** Eating after exercise is a critical part of muscle recovery. The best results happen when the snack is consumed within 30 minutes after practice. A general rule of thumb is to have fluid, carbohydrates, and a little protein. Suggestions include:
 - Fruit Smoothie
 - Glass of milk
 - Yogurt and fruit
 - String Cheese and fruit
 - Hard boiled eggs
 - Beef or Turkey jerkey
- A meal should be followed up after the practice or swim meets within 1-2 hours.
- **Say yes** to foods close to nature (minimally processed and preserved), always choose fresh foods over pre-packaged items, try to eat foods that are nutritionally dense (high in micro nutrients) and make sure that there is enough fiber in your diet. Avoid refined sugars and enriched items. Choose whole grains over those that have been stripped of their natural content.
- **Say no** to junk food
 - Chips, candy, soda, donuts, French Fries, Nachos....