

NUTRITION FOR SWIMMERS

The importance of protein:

- Builds muscle, stabilizes blood sugar, keeps endurance and energy steady
- Too little protein won't allow the muscles to recover – can lead to injuries and strains
- Best eaten right after a workout, versus carbs
- Aim for about 30% of diet to be protein, 25-35% to be from healthy fats, and 35-45% from carbs (try to get a balance of macros at all meals and snacks)
- Other than chicken, meats, eggs, fish and nuts, you can use protein powders and protein bars (watch sugar levels)

Water and electrolytes:

- Sweating is less noticeable when swimming, so keeping up on hydration is important (easy to under-hydrate during and post-workout)
- Obvious indicators of dehydration are not as apparent when in the water (excessive sweating, dry mouth, overheating)
- Just slight dehydration reduces your training capacity, meaning you have to work harder to swim, your performance goes down, and you're more likely to be moody and fatigued
- Post-workout recovery slows down when you're dehydrated
- Electrolytes are positively and negatively charged ions that use electrical activity to perform functions in the body, such as maintaining fluid balance, muscle contractions and neural activity
- Water is drawn to electrolytes in the body, so therefore you lose electrolytes when you sweat (primarily sodium, chloride, potassium, magnesium and calcium)
- Electrolytes are what causes sweat to be salty – the saltier your sweat, the more electrolytes you are losing
- For swimmers training for more than 90 minutes who are salty sweaters, it's a good idea to have an electrolyte drink prior to working out
- For during a workout, you can use water with an electrolyte powder (such as Trace Minerals packets – they equal out to about \$0.42 per packet when you purchase a box – Natural Grocers), or you can alternate with an electrolyte drink and plain water. Another option for those that don't like flavored beverages during a workout is to put a pinch of Himalayan Pink Sea Salt into a bottle of water (regular table salt won't work because it doesn't have all of the minerals). I don't really recommend drinks such as Gatorade because of the high concentration of sugar. This can actually make an athlete feel sick during a workout and it's just not healthy anyway. If you need to replace some carbohydrates, I would recommend having a piece of fruit instead. However, if you really want a Gatorade, I would recommend you drink it after practice or the swim meet is over, as it will help you rehydrate faster than water alone.
- Try to drink a minimum of one 8-12oz bottle of electrolyte water during each 90 minutes of exertion