



STARTING blocks

NUTRITION



VICTORY VITTLES

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Fueling up isn't something that should happen the day before a big meet. It's a season-long, if not year-round commitment to optimal performance.

A proper balance of protein and carbs is important, says registered dietician Judy Fields.

Drink milk – two to three cups a day, four for teenage boys. You can substitute one ounce of quality protein like chicken or a half-ounce of turkey jerky, plus 300mg of calcium for every cup. Yogurt is okay, too.

Eat two servings of protein a day in the form of meat, fish or poultry. Each serving should be about the size of one deck of playing cards.

Recommended servings of fruits and vegetables have been bumped up to 2-4 servings of fruits and 3 to 5 servings of vegetables a day. Include baby carrots, tomatoes and celery. "But don't overdo the dressing," says Fields.

"Complex carbs are needed a whole lot by swimmers," Fields says. Get them from whole grains because you won't find them in white bread and pasta. Eat at least three servings a day, and include oats and rye, not just whole wheat. The new white wheat is a way to introduce kids to whole grains, but it's not nearly as nutritious as regular whole grain bread.

Before a workout, eat complex carbs without a lot of fat, maybe a little cottage cheese and fruit, or whole grain toast or whole grain waffle. Afterward, add a protein source like a smoothie with yogurt, milk and fruit.

"Before a meet, put more emphasis on carbs, but not excessive carb loading like they used to do for a while," Fields says. "The day of the meet have a good high-carb breakfast and keep fluids going throughout the day."

Specialized sports drinks are good, but stay away from soft drinks and sugar-added fruit drinks.

Keep low-fat carbs and protein available during the meet – a turkey or chicken sandwich and low-fat mozzarella cheese sticks are good choices – and keep smoothies poolside. Etamame – soybeans – are a good source of protein. They come dried, salted and flavored.

Judy Fields, RD, MHS, FADA, is a registered dietician with private practices in Fair Oaks and Vacaville, California.



Jessica Knowles, BS, owner of Food 101-The Traveling Nutritionist, lives in Evergreen, Colorado and has been a sports nutrition counselor for over eight years. She can be reached at food101@comcast.net or check out her website www.Myfood101.com.

As a swimmer, I find it so hard to eat. I'm either starving myself or eating something junky. My parents are always on me to eat right. I'm not worried about my weight. I'm only 100 pounds and very tiny. I just find it hard to eat, especially when I'm not hungry at all. Have any suggestions?

Melanie

All right, Melanie, here is your plan of attack to get your parents off your case and be a healthier, stronger swimmer.

You need to plan your food every day so you don't forget to eat or so you don't get so ravenous that you feast at the vending machine. First you need to eat breakfast, even if you're not hungry. You can make easy stuff like a bagel with cream cheese, cereal, a piece of fruit, yogurt, even leftovers from the night before. Then you will make your lunch, so you're not tempted to eat fast food or worse, starve yourself. And you will keep plenty of healthy snacks with you in your locker, your swim bag and in your car. And finally there is dinner. Make sure you eat even if it's super late.



Let's review. First there's breakfast, then a snack, then lunch, then yes, another snack and finally dinner. Some ideas for snacks that won't spoil too quickly are fruit, dried fruit, granola bars, jerky, trail mix and mini bagels. When you plan your day, you will no longer be in a vicious cycle of eating garbage and then feeling bad about eating the garbage and then not eating at all.

Sometimes I feel a little weak and light-headed during a tough workout. It's like I bonk. I'm usually better after I eat. Is there anything I can do to avoid it, and what should I do if it happens again?

Tom L.

Tom, the advice I gave Melanie should also help you too. Make sure you also eat before practice. If you have less than an hour before practice, then you need to eat quick energy (simple carbs) like sports drinks and gel packs. During exercise, you also need energy and hydration, so I again recommend sports drinks. This should keep up with your energy and hydration needs, hence no bonkage!

Have a question about nutrition? Send it to us at splash@usaswimming.org. Or find a nutritionist in your area by using the Sports Medicine Database at usaswimming.org. Just click on the "Parents" tab, then on "Health Issues" on the left hand side of the page.