

Section 9 - PREPARATION FOR A COMPETITION **West London Beacon 2012**

All strategies to be used during a competition should have been tried and tested in training and at minor events and NOT for the first time at a major competition.

Beacon swimmers should set themselves 4 main nutrition goals.

GOAL 1

- ✓ To ensure maximum storage of glycogen (carbohydrate). A failure to do so will result in early fatigue/tiredness. Although a one off swim may not severely deplete these stores, competition over several races, warm-up, heats, finals on successive days will significantly reduce glycogen stores. You cannot race as fast in a glycogen-depleted state.

GOAL 2

- ✓ To stay hydrated at all times. The heat and humidity of most swimming pools increases fluid loss. Fluid requirements are often neglected in the excitement and nervous tension of a gala. If fluid losses are not matched by fluid intake, dehydration will result. A dehydrated swimmer will race slower than a well hydrated one!

GOAL 3

- ✓ To stay healthy and illness-free. A well-balanced nutrition programme will help to reduce the risk of becoming ill during this time.

GOAL 4

- ✓ To maintain a familiar nutrition programme. Never eat anything new or try a new drink before or during a gala. Stick to what you know works for you. Take a picnic bag of food with you so you do not get caught short. Food at many leisure centres is notoriously unhealthy and high in fat!

THE WEEK BEFORE A RACE

The key to consuming a well balanced diet and to stay healthy and illness free (Goal 3) is to vary food choices to include a wide variety of different foods. A swimmer who exists on a plan of crisps/chips and fizzy drinks with the odd take-away thrown in for good measure, will not meet his/her requirements. A little prior planning and some sensible shopping can make a mountain of difference.

SWIMMERS SHOULD FOLLOW THE RECOMMENDATIONS BELOW:

- ✓ Eat plenty of whole grains such as cereals/pasta/rice/bread/oats etc.
- ✓ Stock up on other high carbohydrate foods such as beans/peas/lentils/potatoes and sweetcorn.
- ✓ Eat some dairy produce each day (milk/cheese/yogurts/fromage frais).
- ✓ Eat some lean meat/fish each day (or a vegetarian alternative).
- ✓ Consume some olive oil or pure vegetable oil, nuts/seeds and oily fish (sardines/salmon/mackerel) and eggs on a regular basis.
- ✓ Eat at least 5 portions of fruit/salad and vegetables (ideally x 3 veg/salad and x 2 fruit) per day.

1 portion fruit/vegetables equals :

- A large handful (120g) veg
- A side plate piled with salad
- One of the following (a banana/an apple/a pear/an orange/a peach etc)
- Two pieces of fruit such as plums/apricots/kiwi etc
- A handful of grapes/strawberries/raspberries/blueberries etc.
- 1 of the above can be replaced with a glass (200mls) of unsweetened fruit juice.

Following the guidelines above should result in a good intake of carbohydrate, adequate levels of protein, vitamins and minerals plus the other nutrients a swimmer needs for good health.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE EVENT

If the guidelines above have been followed then all that is required the evening before a competition is a normal sized meal which contains some carbohydrate and protein. The meal should also include some vegetables and fruit. Don't forget some fluid (water/milk) as well. Here are some favourites:

- ☀ Spaghetti Bolognese with vegetables
- ☀ Pasta bake with chicken and vegetables
- ☀ Tuna and sweetcorn pasta
- ☀ Pasta with lean bacon in a tomato based sauce and vegetables
- ☀ Rice with beans chicken and vegetables
- ☀ Rice with chilli and vegetables
- ☀ Home-made stir-fried rice or noodles with chicken/tofu/vegetables
- ☀ Home-made potato wedges with gilled fish and salad
- ☀ Jacket potato with beans/ cheese /tuna /chilli and salad
- ☀ Shepherd's/cottage pie and vegetables
- ☀ Fish pie with mashed potato topping and vegetables

- ☀️ Chunky, home-made vegetable soup with toasted sandwich
- ☀️ Beans on toast (thick slices)/bagel
- ☀️ Scrambled eggs and grilled tomatoes on toast
- ☀️ Chicken and salad tortilla wraps
- ☀️ Boiled/mashed potato grilled chicken breast and vegetables
- ☀️ Grilled sausages with mash and vegetables
- ☀️ Couscous with vegetables and lean, grilled lamb kebabs

THE PRE-RACE MEAL

The pre-competition meal serves to top up glycogen stores (mainly liver glycogen), maintain hydration, stave off hunger, and give you a psychological boost.

If a swimmer is prone to pre-event nerves, diarrhoea or an upset stomach, then this meal should also be low in 'fibre' (i.e. baked beans/wholegrain cereal/dried fruit may aggravate the situation!). The key is to choose foods that are tolerated, that have been tried and tested before training or in minor competitions.

The timing and size of the meal will depend on the start time of the warm-up and first race. As a general rule it is wise to leave 3-4 hours to digest a larger meal and 1-2 hours for a lighter version. The specifics will depend on the individual swimmer. Evaluate what works best for you and stick to it. A swimmer who is racing first thing in the morning might consume a cereal/toast/fruit juice breakfast 1-2 hours before the warm up providing some carbohydrate and fluid, satisfying hunger whilst avoiding any discomfort that might arise from eating too close to the race.

Some ideal pre-race meals and snacks are listed below:

PRE-EVENT MEALS/SNACK

Wholegrain breakfast cereal with milk

Porridge with syrup, banana or raisins

Wholegrain toast/bagel/English muffins/crumpets with Marmite/honey and a glass of milk

Pancakes with fresh fruit/ syrup and yogurt

Baked beans on wholegrain toast

Boiled/poached eggs on bagel

Toasted tea-cake/currant bun with a glass of milk

Yogurt/fromage frais and fresh fruit

If food is not easily tolerated at this time consider:

Innocent style or homemade fruit smoothies

Yogurt/yogurt drinks

Milk or homemade milkshakes

Sports drinks/refueling supplements

Sports gels/bars

Tinned rice pudding or custard

Water should also be consumed regularly.

BETWEEN RACES

Keep hydrated. Carry a drinks bottle with you at all times and remember to sip regularly. Water is fine. Some swimmers like to use a cordial or sports drink (such as Lucozade Sport or Gatorade) between races as well. The advantage of sports drinks is that they deliver fluid and carbohydrate at the same time. In practice this means that swimmers need not worry about eating between races until the next break between sessions when there is time to digest a 'picnic' style lunch.

If snacks between races are necessary (this will probably be the case if water is your chosen drink), the length of time between races as well as individual preferences will determine what is suitable to eat. Keep a few bits to 'nibble on' in your kit bag along with your drinks.

- ❖ Bananas/grapes/pieces of melon/mango/pineapple/orange segments
- ❖ Small tubs of raisins/dried apricots/mango or other dried fruits
- ❖ Handful nuts (if not allergic)
- ❖ Breadsticks or crackers with Marmite or jam
- ❖ Yogurt pouches/tubes
- ❖ Plain popcorn
- ❖ Cereal bars/dried fruit or breakfast bars/Energy bars
- ❖ Rice cakes/tubs of dry breakfast cereal

It becomes evident that eating patterns over a competition period vary considerably when compared to normal training. A pattern of 'snacking' is usually adopted. It is therefore, even more important, if competing over several days, that attention is paid to selecting healthy snacks and meals and that a sensible breakfast and evening meal is eaten. Plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables should be consumed wherever possible. This often involves swimmers taking a bag of fruit/salad with them to meets.

It is worth labeling your drinks bottles clearly. This is particularly important if you are using sports drinks or water in plastic bottles. Check the poolside during a meet and you will see numerous bottles of orange flavoured Lucozade Sport!! How do you know which one is yours?

Minimize the spread of germs-label all drinks or decant into your normal, labeled sports bottle.

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Take the opportunity to refuel between sessions. For example, there is usually an hour break between the 2 main sessions at most competitions. This gives you the opportunity to consume a 'proper' picnic lunch. This is preferable to a pattern of continual snacking that can be less healthy. Once again, the choice will be dependent on the time available. Use the table as a guideline.

AIM TO EAT FROM THIS LIST FIRST:

Pasta salad/rice salad/couscous salad
Hot pasta/risotto in Thermos type flask
Jacket potato with filling
Toasted sandwich
Sandwiches/rolls with chicken/ham/cheese/houmous/egg and salad
Wraps/bagels/pitta bread with Marmite/peanut butter and honey/tuna and sweetcorn
Crackers with Marmite/cheese spread/peanut butter/banana
Chunky soup and a roll
Cheese scones with Marmite

TOP UP WITH FOODS BELOW

Scones/tea-cakes/Scotch pancakes/currant buns/Malt loaf
Fresh fruit/fruit salad/vegetable sticks
Yogurt or yogurt drinks/fromage frais/milk
Fruit smoothies/milkshakesmeal replacement drinks
Energy bars/fruit bars/cereal bars
Rice pudding/custard
Oatmeal biscuits/fig rolls/Jaffa Cakes/Garribaldi biscuits
Homemade bars/muffins/cookies

(include a drink with any food that is consumed).

If the session over-runs and time is limited - LESS THAN 1 HOUR

Jam/honey/Marmite roll
Home-made bars/muffins/cookies
Bananas/grapes/ or dried fruit
Slices melon/orange/pineapple
Breakfast cereal with milk
Crackers with jam/honey/Marmite
Fruit/cereal/energy bars/breakfast bars
Sports drinks/sports carbohydrate and protein supplements
Carbohydrate gels
Yogurts/yogurt drinks/fromage frais
Smoothies/milk/milk drinks
Plain
Oatmeal biscuits/Fig rolls/Jaffa Cakes/Garribaldi biscuits

POST-COMPETITION

Whilst the temptation is to tuck into burgers/chips (etc!!) to celebrate at the end of the day, such choices may not meet your fuel, fluid and other nutrient requirements. The following advice is essential if competing the next day. Start to refuel as soon as you warm down from the last race. Rehydrate as well. The rules are the same as if in training.

If you are away from home or eating ‘en route’ use the list below to help you to choose wisely.

- ✓ Pizza/pasta restaurants-thin crust pizza with salad or tomato/vegetable base pasta dish with chicken and salad
- ✓ Chinese –focus on rice/noodles with chicken/fish and vegetable dishes
- ✓ Hotel food –jacket potato with filling and salad/grilled steak or fish with jacket potato and salad/curry and rice with a naan
- ✓ Indian food-focus on rice/naan and vegetable dishes such as biriyani plus ‘dry’ sauce free choices such as ‘chicken tikka’, ‘chicken shashlik’ or tandoori chicken.

Always include vegetables/salad with the meal, a drink and fresh fruit with dessert.

SUMMARY – TOP TIPS

The information above is designed to fully prepare you, from a nutrition perspective, for your next event. To summarize:

- ✓ Focus on your carbohydrate and fluid intake at a competition
- ✓ Drink a little and often and carry a drinks bottle with you at all times
- ✓ Try to maintain a well balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables and some protein as well.
- ✓ Stick to meals and snacks that you have tried and tested.
- ✓ Stick to timings that you have tried and tested.
- ✓ Take a cool bag of carefully selected meals/snack to last for the whole day
- ✓ Never eat or drink anything new for the first time at a competition

NUTRITION CHECKLIST-THINGS TO TAKE TO A RACE:

Make a plan of what you need to take with Mum/Dad or whoever organizes the food.

Pack food in cool boxes with ice-packs/insulated lunch bag/box/Thermos type flasks

HYDRATION

Labeled drinks bottles (at least x 1 litre fluid per session)

Extra water in case it is super-hot

Other drinks to add variety (particularly if competing over several day)-try milk/flavoured milk/flavoured water.

ENERGY

Healthy picnic lunch with savoury and sweet choices (see above for ideas)

Healthy snacks for between races plus a couple of foods that can be tolerated should sessions overrun and time between sessions is limited (see above for ideas)

HEALTH

A container of fresh fruit/fruit salad and/or vegetable sticks

PLAN AHEAD

If you are competing over 2 or more days discuss with your parents how you are going to refuel adequately from one day to the next. If your journey home is long then take some food with you to eat on the way home. If you are going to stop then know where and what you are going to eat.