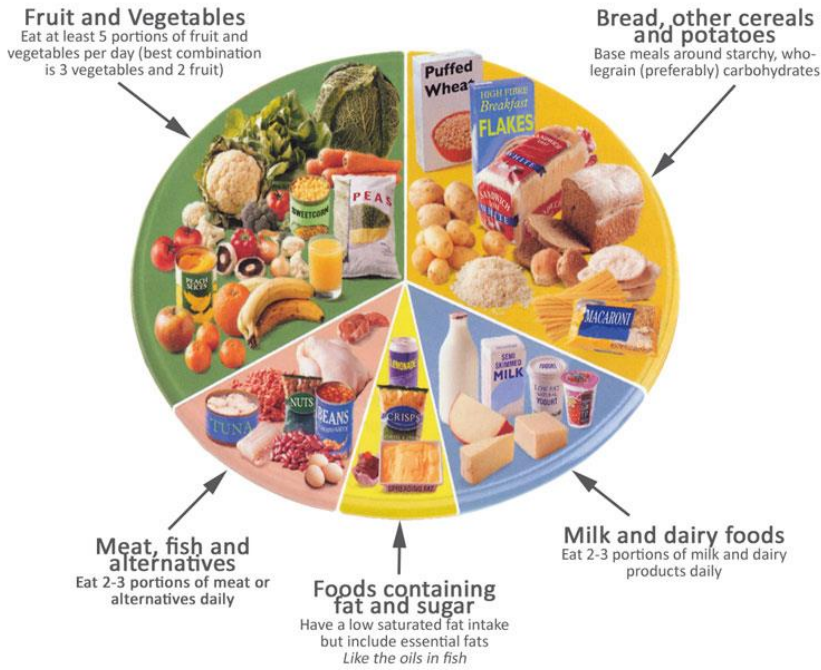


# Nutrition for Swimmers

The way in which the body is fuelled can have a huge impact on performance and recovery. Additionally, a well-balanced diet can provide the nutrients needed for a healthy immune system.

## So what should you eat and when?

Intense training requires a diet that is high in carbohydrates for fuel; protein for muscle repair and growth; and healthy (unsaturated) fats for good health.



This plate illustrates what constitutes the healthy, well balanced diet necessary for a swimmer. Unrefined carbohydrates such as whole pasta, brown rice, or wholemeal bread make up one third of the plate. Another third should contain protein, such as fish, (oily fish should be eaten twice a week) chicken, eggs, or lean cuts of meat, lentils, or beans. The last third of the plate should be made up of vegetables or salad. This will help to provide essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. Aim to eat a minimum of 5 portions of fruit and vegetables, (ideally 2 fruit and 3 or more portions of vegetables) a day. Healthy fats such as olive oil, nuts, and seeds, as well as oily fish are good sources of omega 3. Omega 3 has many health benefits, such as helping to improve sleep and boosting memory and brain function.

As a swimmer, it is important to fuel your body for early morning training. A snack high in carbohydrates will result in a blood sugar crash and poor performance. When training in the evenings, it is important to eat regularly throughout the day. Snacks help to keep blood sugar balanced. Ideally, meals should be eaten a couple of hours before training. If this is not possible, a small meal or snack including unrefined carbohydrates, protein and vegetables will do. After training, it is necessary to refuel. This aids muscle repair and restores glycogen energy reserves in the liver. Ideally a snack containing both carbohydrate and protein is a good choice.

## Hydration

Drinking regularly throughout the day will help to ensure that dehydration does not occur. Being dehydrated may hinder training. Drinking small amounts of water every so often during training is essential. Post training rehydration aids recovery. Avoid fizzy drinks, including energy drinks, as they are packed full of sugar and chemicals. Diluted cordial or water is a better choice.

## Sugar, Blood sugar and Insulin

Too much sugar in the blood stream will trigger the release of a hormone called insulin, which lowers the blood sugar concentration. This may result in a blood sugar crash, causing symptoms such as fatigue and light headedness. As a result, performance will suffer. Commercial snacks have similar effects on blood sugar. Healthier choices include nuts, dried fruit, bananas and oat based (low added sugar) cereal bars.

## Food Ideas:

### Early Morning Training

- Wholegrain toast with honey or nut butter
- Smoothie with a handful of nuts or seeds
- Small bowl of porridge with some fruit
- Fruit and nuts

### Post Training Refuel

- Fruit and nuts/seeds
- Yoghurt and fruit
- Wholegrain sandwich, cheese or ham
- Wholegrain toast and nut or seed butter
- Milk and fruit

### Breakfast

- Porridge, banana and nuts or seeds
- Wholegrain toast with eggs
- Granola or Muesli (no added sugar) with fruit, natural yoghurt or milk

### Lunch

- Wholemeal pitta bread with chicken and salad
- Wholegrain sandwich with tuna and cucumber
- Wholemeal pasta salad (lean meat, tomato, peppers, sweet corn etc, with olive oil dressing)

Add a selection of raw vegetables and a piece of fruit

### Dinner

- Roasted Mediterranean vegetables (peppers, courgette, red onions, garlic), quinoa and poached salmon
- Baked chicken breasts with Piri Piri rub served with brown basmati rice and vegetables
- Spanish omelette (potato and onion) served with a large salad
- Wholemeal Spaghetti Bolognese (add lots of chopped vegetables to the sauce e.g. celery, carrot, mushrooms)
- Prawn stir fry with rice noodles

## **Eat a Rainbow of Food Everyday!**

By encouraging children to eat a variety of colours from their diet you will ensure that they get a wide variety of nutrients. Installing good eating habits from a young age is a very precious gift to pass on.



**Eat** the Colors of the **Rainbow**