

PERFORMANCE PLAYBOOK



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Swimming: Breakfast and Recovery Strategies

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Breakfast Strategies

Like many student athletes who vie for gym space and playing time, swimmers often face early-morning workouts due to pool scheduling and availability. It is not uncommon to see swimmers in the water by 5 a.m. One of the concerns with scheduling practices early in the morning is what to do with breakfast.

Athletes are often advised to eat 2 to 3 hours before exercise to allow for stomach-emptying. Most athletes do not want to eat just before practice or a competition, as the food left in their stomach may cause nausea and gastrointestinal upset. So rather than getting up at the crack of dawn to eat, many swimmers simply forgo food before practice. This habit of skipping food or a meal before exercise, especially after an overnight fast, can lower the body's store of energy and impair the athletes' ability to train and compete.

How can swimmers eat breakfast without having to wake up at 3 a.m.? Simply stated, swimmers need to snack before an early-morning swim and then eat breakfast once the workout is over. While it's not easy, once the swimmer gets into the swing of it, the habit becomes routine. Recent research has also found that individuals who eat breakfast maintain a lower body weight compared with those who skip breakfast. This could have an impact on swimmers who are trying to maintain a lean profile in the water. To make sure that swimmers eat a breakfast, have them pack breakfast foods the night before, and then they can grab it and eat it in the car if they are pressed for time in the morning.

Try these suggestions:

- Two pieces of toast with juice
- Small bowl of cereal with low-fat milk
- ½ banana and 1 tablespoon peanut butter
- Bagel with small amount of cream cheese
- Applesauce and 2 graham crackers
- Energy bar and a sports drink (Gatorade)
- Crackers and a sports drink
- Raisins and pretzels
- Fig bars and low-fat milk or a sports drink

Recovery Strategies

Once the early-morning workout is over, it is very important that swimmers eat a regular breakfast as part of a recovery nutrition process. Most competitive swimmers work out 6 out of 7 days. To recover from the workout, both fluid and fuel must be available to the body. The recovery meal needs to be eaten within 30 minutes after the workout, so the body can start the recovery process faster and be fueled and recovered by the next practice to provide a quality workout.

Some swimmers are unable to eat after practice due to time constraints, lack of appetite, or stomach discomfort. During these times, a liquid meal replacement, such as a nutrition shake or a high-carbohydrate drink, can be used. When the appetite returns, they should try to eat the suggestions listed below:

- One bagel with peanut butter and banana
- Bowl of oatmeal with raisins and nuts
- One cup of low-fat yogurt, banana, and orange juice
- Waffle with low-fat milk
- Three pancakes with syrup and low-fat milk
- One breakfast egg sandwich with ham and orange juice

