

Good Snacks for the Day of a Swim Meet

Sprinters and long-distance swimmers alike benefit from proper fueling through a well-balanced diet. Carbohydrates are the primary source of fuel for any athlete -- and making smart food choices in the days leading up to a swim meet, as well as having several snacks on race day, can result in achieving your personal best time. Increased adrenaline, which can cause a loss of appetite, as well as nerves, may make eating a full meal the day of a meet difficult. Eating several small meals or snacks throughout the day can ensure your body is properly fueled for your events.

Overall Diet for a Swimmer

All athletes perform best when they follow a well-balanced diet every day -- not just on race day. A balance of carbohydrates, protein and fat is better than focusing on carbohydrates or protein alone. When time permits, have a full meal three to four hours before your meet to allow proper digestion. Start the day with a breakfast of oatmeal or peanut butter on toast with fruit and milk. Do not experiment with new foods or sports gels the day of a meet. Keep in mind that foods high in fiber, fat or caffeine can negatively affect your digestive system. Keep track of the types of foods that work best for you on training days.

Snacks for the Meet

Keeping a variety of portable snacks in your swim bag will ensure you have a good source of nutrition whenever you need it. On the USA Swimming website, registered dietitian Jill Castle suggests several key snacks to keep in your swim bag such as nuts, which provide protein, fiber and healthy fats. Nut butters are perfect for dipping apple slices or other snack foods into. Dried fruit is a concentrated source of carbohydrates and easy to nibble when you're pressed for time. Baggies of dry whole-grain cereals, crackers or pretzels also provide easy-to-digest carbohydrates. Beef jerky, as well as sunflower or pumpkin seeds, are other good snack options. Also, a small portable cooler can safely store other healthy snacks such as low-fat yogurt, string cheese, lean deli meats and cartons of low-fat milk.

Hydration Needs

Even though they're submerged in water, swimmers need to stay properly hydrated to perform their best. Keep plenty of water on hand for swim meets, especially when competing outside during the summer months. Sports beverages can easily replace lost carbohydrates and electrolytes after an event or serve as a quick source of energy prior to racing when eating solid food is not appealing.

Recovery Needs

Replacing muscle fuel, nutrients and fluids shortly after competing is essential to maximizing performance when several events are scheduled within a day or subsequent days. A quick snack of graham crackers with peanut butter, a banana and chocolate milk is easy to pack and can tide you over until you are able to eat a full, balanced meal.