



# YORK CITY BATHS CLUB

## NUTRITION PREPARATION FOR SWIMMING COMPETITIONS

Preparing for a swimming event in which you'll be racing several times in one day requires a well-planned nutrition strategy. Ensuring your fuel (glycogen) stores are fully stocked and your body properly hydrated will help you put in your best performance.

### 2 Weeks Before

- If you will be racing early in the morning, change your eating times to reflect this.
- **Practice** your competition-day eating strategy in training prior to putting it in place.
- As your training volume drops, you should also **adjust your food** (calorie) intake to match your energy expenditure - otherwise you may end up with unwanted last minute weight gain.

### The Week Before

- Eating a **balanced diet** is really all you need to do during the last week: protein, carbs, fats, fruit + veg.
- Focus on the **nutritional quality** (nutrient-density) of your diet by minimising sugar and refined carbohydrates.
- **Carbohydrate loading is not relevant** for most swimming competitions unless you plan to swim continuously for more than 2-3 hours.

## The Day Before

You need to plan your meals and snacks carefully, and keep properly hydrated. Take your own food and drink for the journey.

- Stick to **plain and familiar foods!** Avoid anything you don't normally eat; spicy foods, beans, fibrous veg (unless you are used to eating them) as they may cause gas and bloating.
- Make sure that you keep yourself **hydrated** by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Your urine should be pale yellow.
- Have **small meals** every 2-4 hours for efficient glycogen fuelling. Avoid big meals or over-eating during the evening otherwise you may feel lethargic the next day.

## Competition Day

### **2 - 4 hours pre-event:**

- Drink **350 - 500 ml of water**, cordial, squash or diluted fruit juice, then another 125-250 ml just before the race.
- Schedule your **pre-race meal** approximately 2-4 hours before the race start time.

### **Pre-event meals:**

- ✓ Porridge with honey
- ✓ Banana and yoghurt
- ✓ Toast with honey, plus milk
- ✓ Eggs on toast
- ✓ Cereal (low fibre) with fruit and milk

### **Between events:**

- Remember: **don't eat anything that you haven't tried** during training.
- Try to **eat and drink as soon as possible** after your heat, allowing a couple of hours between eating and swimming.
- Take **frequent drinks** of water or, if you cannot face solid food, have sports drinks or diluted cordial so at least you'll get the carbohydrate you need.
- Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt.

## **Light meals:**

If you will be racing later in the day, schedule a mini meal or lunch 2-4 hours before the start. It should be rich in carbohydrate and also contain protein.

- Pasta or rice - add any combination of veg (peppers, tomatoes, cucumber, sweetcorn), nuts, tuna, chicken, cheese.
- Sandwiches, wraps, rolls, pitta with chicken; tuna; cheese; peanut butter.

## **After The Event**

Your preparation for your next day's events starts the moment the previous one has finished. So you must re-fuel and rehydrate as soon as possible.

- Have at least 2 cups (250-500 ml) of water within 30 minutes of finishing your event. If you are dehydrated (check your urine), a sports drink or diluted juice with a pinch of added salt will help to rehydrate you faster.
- Kick-start your recovery by eating a carbohydrate-protein snack within 30 minutes after your event - this increases glycogen storage and helps muscles repair faster.
- Your dinner should contain carbohydrate and protein as well as some fat. Try pasta with chicken and vegetables or a jacket potato with tuna and ratatouille. Avoid the temptation to feast on fast foods.

## Fuelling and Hydration Race Day Strategy

	Hydration	Fuel needs	Suitable foods
2 - 4 h before the event	Drink 5-7 ml / kg (approx 350-500ml water)	Eat 2-4g carbs/ kg (approx 100-200g)	Eggs on toast ; Porridge with bananas, raisins and honey; Cereal with milk and bananas; Toast, fruit and milk
<b>Warm up</b>			
Post-warm up	100-200 ml	Eat 1 g carbs/ kg (approx 50-70g)	Water, squash, sports drink Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt
<b>Race</b>			
Between events	Drink approx 100-250ml immediately after race, and then little and often	Eat 1 g carbs/ kg (approx 50-70g)	Water, squash or sports drink Bananas, fruit, dried fruit, rice cakes, energy or granola bars, yoghurt
After the event	Drink 750ml/ 0.5kg weight loss	Eat a small snack with a 3:1 ratio of carbs to protein	Flavoured milk; milk and flapjack; recovery drink, sandwich and yoghurt

## NUTRITION PREPARATION FOR SWIMMING COMPETITIONS

### About the Author

This article was written by registered nutritionist **Anita Bean**, [www.anitabean.co.uk](http://www.anitabean.co.uk), and reproduced for the York City Baths Club website with her kind permission.

### Further Reading

Books by **Anita Bean**, available from Amazon

