



The right foods and drinks can help you be a better athlete

What is nutrition? This is the food required to grow, repair and maintain our bodies.

What is food? It is any solid or liquid we take in which helps us grow, repair and maintain our bodies – it supplies us with heat and energy.

What is a nutrient? It is the chemical substances found in food when we eat it which supplies us with heat and energy. There are 6 main nutrients:

- Carbohydrates – required for energy
- Proteins – essential for growth and repair
- Fats – used as fuel but also protection and regulation
- Vitamins – support the immune, hormonal and nervous systems
- Minerals – regulate your metabolic, hormonal and nervous interactions
- Water – cleans and hydrates the body and regulates body temperature

A healthy diet should provide all these essential nutrients in recommended amounts, support our training sessions and aid recovery from training.

An athlete needs to understand nutrition and be very aware of how they are treating their bodies.

When you are preparing for training you make sure you have your swimwear, goggles, kit bag and hopefully a bottle of water. As an athlete you come prepared – you ensure that you have all the equipment you need for the training session or for the competition so you can be the best you can be in the water. When you make the effort to get up for an early

morning session you want to make sure you give it 100%. When you attend a gala, you want to ensure you put yourself in the best possible position.

We all witness the Terenure Swim Team day in and day out:

- Planning their training/race day
- Going to bed early so they have the energy required for early morning sessions
- Preparing their kit's, the night before
- Attending all their sessions
- Listening to their coach
- Following instructions
- Giving it their best

This is all wonderful but will not be effective unless you are healthy and well and fuelling yourself properly from the inside out. The right foods and drinks can help you be a better athlete.

So, what makes athletes different when it comes to eating? If you are training your body more you require to fuel it with quality foods in the right quantity.

So, I hope you are now convinced that eating properly will affect how you train and compete and your overall wellbeing. So, the next question I am sure you are asking is 'What do I eat'?

Before training:

It is important to provide your body with energy prior to your training session. Good choices will support intensive training and reduce your risk of illness and injury. It will also help optimise your performance. It is recommended to eat up to one hour before exercise. Ideally a good mix of carbohydrates, proteins and fats:

Good sources of carbohydrates include whole grains, vegetables and fruits.

Good sources of protein include lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans and nuts.

Good sources of fat include lean meat and poultry, fish, nuts, seeds, dairy products, and olive oils.

Tips:

1. Choose brown breads, pasta or rice - it will keep you going for longer
2. Combine Carbohydrates with fat and protein to aid digestion and slow down the sugar release

Pre-training meal ideas:

Full Meal

- *Porridge oats with fruit, chia seeds, flax seeds and berries (drizzle of honey)*
- *2 Weetabix with full fat milk, berries and drizzle of honey*
- *Wholegrain pasta/rice with meat and vegetables*
- *Jacket potato with beans, chicken, tuna or cheese. Add a side salad*

Light snack (early morning swim)

- *Banana with some nuts and seeds or an energy ball*
- *2 slices of wholegrain toast with some nut butter*
- *Chia seed jam on rice cakes*

After training

Recovery foods should be consumed within 30 min of exercise, and again within 1 to 2 hours of exercise, to help reload muscles and allow for proper recovery. These foods should include protein and carbohydrates.

Full meal

- *Porridge oats with fruit, chia seeds, flax seeds and berries (drizzle of honey)*
- *2 Weetabix with full fat milk, berries and drizzle of honey*
- *Meat or fish with steamed vegetables and sweet potatoes*
- *Wholegrain pasta/rice with meat and vegetables*
- *Jacket potato with beans, chicken, tuna or cheese and a side salad*
- *Chicken or salmon salad with cous cous or quinoa, nuts and seeds*

- *Steamed vegetables with chickpeas, beans or lentils*

Light snack

- *Nut butter on oat cakes or rice cakes*
- *Hummus on oatcakes or rice cakes*
- *Nuts, seeds and fruit*
- *Nut butter on wholegrain toast*
- *Beans on toast*
- *Home-made soup with 2 slices of wholegrain bread*
- *Wholemeal pitta and hummus*
- *Fruit salad with seeds and natural yogurt*
- *Smoothie with banana, berries, natural yogurt or milk, chia seeds*

Bring on the Liquids

Hydration is equally important in injury prevention, recovery from training and peak performance. Ensuring athletes are adequately hydrated will ensure they get the most out of school and training. As a general guide, athletes should consume water throughout the day to ensure they are always hydrated. Below is a table which gives a rough guide to how much should be consumed. Products such as soft drinks, energy drinks or isotonic drinks should be avoided at all cost as these have adverse effects on hydration levels and energy levels. In order to maintain salt levels, adding a small pinch of table salt to a 1ltr bottle of cordial will work and not be tasted.

When	Water
Through the day, every 60-90min	200ml
2 hours prior to training	500mls
During – every 15 mins	200 mls
After exercise, every hour	200mls

Some fruit may help with hydration and recovery after training. The following fruit have high levels of water content and also contain vital vitamins, minerals and carbohydrates.

Watermelon = 92%

Strawberry = 92%

Cantaloupe = 90%

Pineapple = 87%

Oranges = 87%

Cucumber = 96%

It's gala time ...

When it's time to compete, you'll get energy from the foods you've been eating all week. But it's still vital to eat well on that day. The best pre-gala meal includes carbohydrates and protein for energy, but is low in fat and fibre, which can slow digestion.

Prepare for the day, bring some healthy snacks and pack your meals and water. Most events are all-day events with no option to buy food at the event or only poor health options or a vending machine.

Avoid sugary foods like fizzy drinks, sweets or cakes. You might get a little energy boost, but it will won't last long, leaving you feeling drained and lacking in energy.

Food for thoughtfor gala's

- *Carrot Cucumber/Celery sticks with or without hummus*
- *Sugar snaps*
- *Protein balls*
- *Dried fruits and nuts*
- *A smoothie in a flask*
- *Pasta in a food thermos with some chicken*

Be prepared

Feed your body well and it will respond

Enjoy your food – it will energise you

