

Maintaining Performance During Cold Weather

As you are aware the cold, wet weather is now here and with it we have seen a drop in the temperature. It is necessary to point out that with the drop in temperature comes a greater responsibility for swimmers to look after their well-being. Over the last few weeks the coaches have noticed an increase in the number of swimmers becoming ill, feeling fatigued and getting injured. Below are some tips to help you maintain your performance throughout the winter months.

Keep Warm and Dry

Possibly the most obvious but most important point. Swimmers are very susceptible to getting ill especially as they have cold early mornings and late nights. Swimmers should be arriving for training in full length clothes, jumpers and coats. They should also have socks and trainers on to keep their feet warm.

When leaving training, often swimmers have wet hair and after an intense session are prone to picking up illness – especially when we are going from hot leisure centres to cold outside temperatures. Swimmers should ensure they dry themselves properly and should all be wearing full length clothes, coats (with hoods) and hats after every session. These should be worn, even if it is just a short trip to the car!

Parents should ensure that their swimmers are wearing suitable clothing before and after every session.

Look after your ears!

Keep your ears dry. Dry your ears thoroughly after exposure to moisture from swimming or bathing. Dry only your outer ear, wiping it slowly and gently with a soft towel or cloth. Tip your head to the side to help water drain from your ear canal. You can dry your ears with a blow dryer if you put it on the lowest setting and hold it at least a foot (about 0.3 meters) away from the ear.

At-home preventive treatment. If you know you don't have a punctured eardrum, you can use homemade preventive eardrops before and after swimming. A mixture of 1 part white vinegar to 1 part rubbing alcohol may help promote drying and prevent the growth of bacteria and fungi that can cause swimmer's ear. Pour 1 teaspoon (about 5 milliliters) of the solution into each ear and let it drain back out. Similar over-the-counter solutions may be available at your drugstore.

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Swim wisely. Watch for signs alerting swimmers to high bacterial counts and don't swim on those days.

Avoid putting foreign objects in your ear. Never attempt to scratch an itch or dig out earwax with items such as a cotton swab, paper clip or hairpin. Using these items can pack material deeper into your ear canal, irritate the thin skin inside your ear or break the skin.

Protect your ears from irritants. Put cotton balls in your ears while applying products such as hair sprays and hair dyes.

Use caution after an ear infection or surgery. If you've recently had an ear infection or ear surgery, talk to your doctor before you go swimming.

Found at: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/swimmers-ear/manage/ptc-20201568>

Recover Properly

To help keep immune systems and energy at a high level, it is essential that swimmers recover properly between sessions. Swimmers should have a snack and drink before every session and a recovery snack after every session (see nutrition guide for ideas). Chocolate milk is a great recovery drink as it offers instant protein and carbohydrate needed to recover and is cheaper than many of the expensive brand drinks.

Keep hydrated!

During the colder months, it is easy to forget to drink and it is amazing how many swimmers are currently not drinking throughout their sessions. We have witnessed some swimmers with two drinks bottles on poolside who won't touch them throughout the session. When you swim, you still sweat, you just don't feel it as much because you are surrounded by water. Even though you do not sweat as much in water, you will still lose fluid therefore it is important to maintain hydration levels and regulate your core body temperature. Even a 1% loss in body weight through dehydration can cause huge detrimental effects to performance. Below are some guidelines for keeping hydrated.

1. Aim to drink 2 litres of fluid per day as the baseline – in school and at home.
2. Bring an additional 1 litre for every hour of exercise/swimming that you do.
3. Put your drink in a thermos bottle to keep it cool and encourage drinking.

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4. If training for more than an hour, or doing multiple training sessions, look to have some salt (half teaspoon), sugars and protein in your recovery drink or food. Adding flavour (cordial) to you drink will also encourage drinking.
5. Weigh yourself before and after exercise, looking to replace every 1kg lost with 1 litre of fluid.
6. To improve recovery rates consume a recovery drink within 20 minutes of completing training/competition.
7. Drink 150-350ml of fluid every 15-20 minutes during training – it is best to sip your drink between repetitions, don't gulp it down.
8. Avoid Energy drinks, such as Red Bull, Rockstar and Monster –they contain between 11-15% carbohydrate, unwanted calories, and very high amounts of sugar and caffeine.

Hydration Urine Colour Chart

Relying on thirst and how you feel is generally not the most reliable way to tell if you are dehydrated. The Hydration Urine Colour Chart below, although a little crude indicates the levels of hydration through the colour of your urine. If you are below the red line, you need to drink more.

1		
2		If your urine matches the colours 1,2 or 3, you are properly hydrated.
3		Continue to consume fluids at the recommended amounts.
4		If your urine colour is below the RED line, you are DEHYDRATED.
5		You are now at risk for cramping and/or heat illness
6		YOU NEED TO DRINK MORE WATER
7		
8		

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Sip Don't Gulp

Swimmers will often say to us they don't enjoy drinking during a session because they feel nauseous, full or get a stitch. This will only happen if you gulp a drink down. Make sure you have a small sip after each couple of repetitions in a set. Even though you don't take on a lot of water each time, it ensures you remain hydrated throughout the session without any negative side effects.

Extra Nutrients

Swimmers who already have a good balanced diet may take additional supplements in an attempt to boost immune function and prevent illness. Multi-vitamins, Cod liver oil, Vitamin C, Iron (e.g. ferrous sulphate), Echinacea, Glutamine, Zinc,

Magnesium, and Octacosanol have all been suggested to help prevent illness, although swimmers taking any supplement should be aware of possible contamination of supplements and consult the BOA statement (www.boa.co.uk/statements) concerning the use of supplementation.

Swimmers should also consult the UK Sport website and investigate any commercial products being taken; see <http://www.100percentme.co.uk> and check on the international Drugs Identification Database: <http://www.didglobal.com/page/PHPSESSID/287c50a52d9ae14dc83b815a389a20ad/category>

Most importantly though, all swimmers should be maintaining a well-balanced diet!

For those people who are prone to getting ill, it may also be worth having a flu jab early in the winter season.

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