

What You Need to Know About Tapering

Before an important meet, such as the end of season championships, swimming teams will go into a training phase known as TAPER. A taper involves a reduction of work and an increase in the amount of rest. The length of a taper will vary for different ages, gender and body type. In general, a young body can recuperate rapidly and does not require as much rest (reduction of training) as a senior swimmer. The age group swimmer is less developed physically and undergoes less intense training than a senior group swimmer. Age Group I swimmers only require a few days of taper. Junior level swimmers are older and train more than Age Group I swimmers, therefore they will respond to a slightly longer taper. Senior Group swimmers obviously follow a similar pattern based on their body type and gender.

During the course of the taper, all types of stress can be gradually reduced. As the taper progresses, the amount of high stress work is decreased and the quality of performance is gradually improved. For optimum performance, it is suggested that swimmers curtail their outside activities as much as possible. Most swim coaches realize that it is not always possible to skip the other sports activities that our younger swimmers participate in on a regular basis. However, the ski trips, snowboarding, skating parties and sleepovers should now be saved for after the championship meets.

When the workload is reduced, there is a noticeable increase in the swimmer's energy level. Resting is an important part of the taper and expending the energy will only work against the purpose of the taper. Ideally, the swimmer should store up as much energy as possible for their important meet!

Being Your Best at Taper Time

#1 EAT and DRINK the RIGHT STUFF

Eat a healthy, balanced diet. Stay away from foods that are high in fat. Make sure that you do eat a light breakfast before a morning meet warm-Up. Drink fluids, especially water and juices. Avoid soda and sweets!

#2 GET ADEQUATE REST

Make sure that you get enough sleep in the weeks leading up to your big meet. For those swimmers in a trials and finals championship meet format, it is essential that you rest between sessions. Avoid running around the hotel or local malls!

#3 ARRIVE at the POOL ON TIME

Arriving early and ready to get in the water for warm-up is key! Being

prepared and not rushed is also important for your state of mind before a meet. Plan ahead in order to get to where you need to be ON TIME!

#4 WARM-UP and WARM-DOWN

Once again, it is essential to arrive at the pool and swim in the assigned team warm-up. Most championship meet facilities provide extra pool space for the competitors to warm-up and warm-down between races. This is especially important for our senior level swimmers to do at their end of season meet.

#5 SPEAK with your COACH BEFORE and AFTER EACH RACE

It is crucial that you speak to your coach before and after each race for valuable race strategy and advice. This includes every kind of race result.

#6 BE EXCITED and INVOLVED with YOUR TEAM and TEAMMATES

When you are not preparing for an event, you should be involved and cheer your teammates on during the meet. This excitement will also help you go faster. BE a TEAM PLAYER!

#7 SELF TALK and VISUALIZATION

As your “BIG” meet gets closer, use positive self-talk when thinking about your events. At the meet, also use positive self-talk with yourself and your teammates. See yourself achieving the goals that you have set for yourself and stay focused on your OWN race during the race.

“THE REAL CONTEST IS ALWAYS BETWEEN WHAT YOU’VE DONE AND WHAT YOU’RE CAPABLE OF DOING. YOU MEASURE YOURSELF AGAINST YOURSELF AND NOBODY ELSE.”

**~ Geoffrey Gaberino
Olympic Gold Medalist - Swimming**