

EATING HABITS OF YOUNG PORTUGUESE SWIMMERS

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BACKGROUND

Young athletes have higher energy needs than other children and adolescents with the same age, because of their higher levels of energy expenditure and different body composition. In swimming it is common to have two sessions of training: one in the morning and other in the afternoon. This often includes a change in eating habits must be optimized in order to respond to nutritional needs and to enhance athletic performance.

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OBJECTIVE

To evaluate eating habits of young swimmers competing in national competitions regulated by the Federação Portuguesa de Natação (Portuguese Federation of Swimming) during the season 2012/2013.

METHODS

Twenty-seven young swimmers: 14 female and 13 male, between the ages of 12 and 21 years, participated in this study. Data collection was performed by a specially designed self-administered questionnaire with questions concerning training habits, meals frequency and food intake by a semi-quantitative food frequency questionnaire. Alcohol was also evaluated.

RESULTS

Subjects trained between 6 and 9 times a week; training sessions had a duration of 2 hours. The majority of meals were made at home by parents and only the two oldest subjects cooked their own meals. All athletes ate a snack before training session including bread or juices, contrarily with occurred after training. Water was consumed by 55,5% and sports drinks by 63% of subjects during training session. Only 12% used ergogenic supplements during competition season. Eggs, yogurts, meat and cereals were the most eaten foods. Athletes consumed more fruits than vegetables and all athletes ate soap twice a day. Alcohol consumption was very low (7,4%); and it was mainly consumed once a month.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of our results, nutritional education should be given to these subjects, coaches and families for promoting healthier eating habits and a better athletic performance.