

# Electrolytes for Athletes

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We are each on our own path figuring out which foods and herbs are the most important in building our personal health and wellness. The following experience shows how quickly healthy foods work and how fast the body responds when you give it what it needs.

My son is a distance swimmer and we were recently at a 3-day state swim meet where he swam the mile (a 17-minute race) the first evening. The next two days he swam 2 events in both preliminaries and finals. He depletes a lot of nutrients during these meets, so we bring good healthy food with us, and I will pick up food to supplement him while we are there. We always follow his stomach.

On the second day of the meet, he hung out with friends in between sessions while I worked remotely. They had sandwiches, hung out together, and made it back to the pool on time. Parents weren't allowed in the venue due to Covid restrictions, so I brought him his race drink (fresh pineapple juice with 2 scoops of Jurassic Green and 1 scoop of sprouted protein powder) and then watched him online. His second race was a rough swim. He looked tired and couldn't get any energy behind him. He was devastated after his race. He sent me a message that he needed me to bring something - salt, minerals, anything - I could tell that something was wrong.

I had a bottle of coconut water with me and headed straight to the pool. He barely made it into the car before he broke down. He felt awful physically and emotionally. His coach saw how tired and upset he was at himself and didn't get mad at him for going so slow - he just told him to get some sleep and that tomorrow would be better.

My son doesn't usually like coconut water, but drank the whole thing and was surprised that it actually tasted good to him. He started feeling a bit better as we explored all the options of what we needed to do. He obviously had an electrolyte imbalance as he kept asking for salt. Out of all the food I mentioned fresh berries sounded best, so we ended up at the grocery store. I offered him a lemon, and that sounded good to him as well. We picked up a bottle of Real Salt, organic raspberries, blackberries, the lemon, and 4 more bottles of coconut water. As soon as we got in the car he ate salt straight from his hand and it made a huge difference. He drank another full coconut water before we got back to the hotel. I had a cutting board and knife and sliced the lemon, offering him small sections at a time. The lemon tasted amazing. He kept laughing that he was just eating a lemon straight - it felt so weird! But it worked. The coconut water, salt and lemon quickly brought his electrolytes back into balance. He ate half a box of raspberries and blackberries, took some enzymes and Lower Bowel formula, and felt really good as he went to bed. He wasn't hungry for anything else. He only needed foods that would bring his body back into balance.

He slept well that night and we were back at the pool at 7am the next morning. He swam in a relay, and also dropped time (making it back to finals) in both of his individual events. He kept his electrolytes in balance during the remaining sessions of the meet by drinking coconut water, taking small amounts of salt, and eating healthy foods in between races.

This experience has helped my son understand more deeply the power of proper nutrition. He's been taking control of his eating and diet, and this experience just took it to the next level. He now knows that when he starts to feel a little off that he needs to increase his intake of electrolytes - not just water. He knows to consistently make better choices to keep his body healthy and in balance. He is learning how to monitor his input of nutrients to balance his intense physical activity.

Not all experiences are as dramatic as our swim meet experience - and they don't need to be! As we practice listening to our bodies we will learn to make the best decisions for building and healing. I challenge you to listen to your body this week. Pay attention to how you feel after eating different foods. Make a better choice and notice how it feels.

Healthy foods work, and they can work quickly. When you give the body what it needs it will absolutely take care of you.

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