

By Meredith Quinn

**TAKE SWIMMING FROM
A SUNNY DAY ACTIVITY
TO A SERIOUS WAY TO
STAY IN SHAPE**

MAKING WAVES

SUMMER IS HERE,

which means warm weather, spending time at the beach and splashing in your favorite body of water. Whether you're in a backyard pool, along a sunny coastal shore or at a tranquil lake in the mountains, incorporating swimming into your fitness routine can help you exercise without harsh impact on your joints.

Swimming also works out stiff muscles, strengthens your heart, increases blood flow and improves flexibility and range of motion. Plus the rhythm of the water paired with your steady breathing are said to create yoga-like meditation, releasing endorphins that will improve your overall happiness.

"Swimming is a full-body workout," says Olympic gold medalist Dana Vollmer, who found out well into her professional swimming career that she has gluten sensitivity and an egg allergy. "While a workout can have a leg or arm focus, you have to use your entire body through the [swimming] process."

And by doing so, those on a gluten-free diet are able to quickly burn the extra calories often found in pre-made meals and snacks. In fact just 10 minutes of swimming can burn 60 to 150 calories, depending on the intensity of the stroke. This can also help you maintain a healthy weight

while decreasing the risk of diabetes and heart disease.

Vollmer credits the lack of gluten in her diet for improving her swimming life, saying, "Honestly it was a blessing to find out. Most of my childhood, I lived with constant stomachaches and multiple runs to the emergency room, never knowing the cause. I took on the challenge of going gluten free with open arms and enthusiasm."

The gluten-free diet also factors into the lifestyle of another swimmer with some claim to fame. *MasterChef Junior* contestant Mia Wurster swims competitively and says, "I earned my first junior Olympic time a few weeks after giving up gluten." Wurster's family has been gluten free since a nutritionist recommended the diet for Mia's sister Faith, who has cerebral palsy.

GETTING SERIOUS

While you may not think you're ready to take your doggie paddle to competition-level butterfly, Vollmer says that it's never too late to get onto the starting blocks. "That's one of the amazing aspects of swimming—it's a form of exercise you can do at any age," she explains.

Wurster notes that making the transition from recreational swimming to a competitive environment can be easy. "Practice is very similar to competition," the 11-year old says. "It is not like football or basketball, where the competition can change every time. In swimming the water is always the same and the pool is always the same length. So if you can swim laps, you can be in a competition."

As far as the weather goes, Vollmer says that, rain or shine, she's swim-

ming—unless there's lightning. "I totally understand how if it's pouring rain, getting in a swimsuit and heading outside to jump in the pool could be the last thing you want to do," she says. "However I [remind] myself that most outdoor pools are kept at a warmer temperature. Once you're in, the rain doesn't matter—it's the lifeguards I feel sorry for."

THE RIGHT STUFF

Swimmers burn a lot of calories in mere minutes, so it's important that they nourish their bodies before, during and after a meet.

Wurster prepares protein pancakes that are made with almond butter, almond flour, egg, chia and banana. "It has a good mix of protein and carbohydrates," she says. (See recipe page 56.)

Though Vollmer tries to eat a small nutrient-dense breakfast beforehand, she says that the most important meals are those in the days before the big competition. "Carbing up is a thing of the past," the four-time Olympic gold medalist says. Instead she maintains her normal diet. "Changing a diet shocks the body and can hinder performance," Vollmer explains. "I have always felt that on race day, my body is fueled by what I ate the previous two days. If I [only] eat healthy the day of the race, I don't have the stores needed to have a good performance."

After the preliminary rounds of a meet, Vollmer makes time to have a large lunch to get her through the final stretch. Meanwhile she keeps a variety of gluten-free snacks nearby, such as trail mix, fruit, fruit bars, crackers, a recovery protein bar and a recovery drink.

To keep her body fueled, Wurster developed a recipe for cookie dough-like treats that she and her teammates call Yum-Yums—they snack on them in between heats.

Both Wurster and Vollmer finish race day with a well-rounded meal. Wurster rewards herself with something she really likes, typically a gluten-free pizza made with almond flour. "Then I combine that with something really healthy and packed with vitamins—usually a green juice from a local juice bar or kale salad or steamed broccoli," she says.

DON'T HOLD BACK

Living gluten free hasn't stopped Wurster and Vollmer from gliding through the water at record-breaking speeds. And Wurster has plenty of advice for kids on the diet. She says being gluten free can help rather than hurt an athlete's performance. "I feel stronger and lighter since being gluten free, and I think that helps in any sport," she says.

Wurster looks up to Vollmer as an inspiration both inside of the pool and out. "I know that after she missed the 2008 Olympics, she had to give up gluten and then she set all kinds of records at the 2012 Olympics," Wurster says. "So she is living proof that you can be a champion as a gluten-free athlete." **GF**

Meredith Quinn is an associate editor at *Gluten-Free Living* and will be working on her butterfly in New Hampshire this summer.



Read Dana Vollmer's blog

UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Stroke by stroke

Squeeze into your suit, strap on some goggles, and get ready to go from beach bum to swimming sensation this summer. Here are some basic moves to get you started.

STROKE	HOW IT'S DONE	Calories burned in 10 minutes
Breaststroke	Head stays above water while below the surface, arms and legs simultaneously sweep forward, out to the sides, and then back in toward the chest. Most advanced swimmers submerge their heads to be more efficient.	60
Backstroke	Swum on the back with legs kicking up and down while arms alternate large, backward circular motions that sweep from above to below the water.	80
Freestyle	The fastest and most efficient stroke. Swum on the stomach with flutter kicks and alternating forward arm motions reaching in front of the swimmer and then pulling back in the water. The face should be submerged, rotating out from underwater simultaneously as one arm pulls back in order to catch a breath.	100
Butterfly	Requiring a lot of strength and great coordination, this stroke involves synchronized freestyle arm movements paired with a double-footed dolphin kick.	150

STOCK/SHUTTER

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Mia's Yum-Yums

This is a race day favorite that Mia Wurster likes to whip up for extra energy. Once you make these a few times, you will be able to estimate the proportions of ingredients and can make them much faster.

MAKES ABOUT 22 BALLS

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cups gluten-free oat flour
- 3/4 cup almond butter
- 1/2 cup coconut oil
- 1/2 cup gluten-free rolled oats
- 1/4 cup maple syrup, Grade B
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon flaxseeds
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix together. Roll the mixture into small bite-size balls and freeze overnight.

Nutrition Analysis (per ball): 160 cal, 12 g fat, 0 mg chol, 25 mg sodium, 12 g carbs, 2 g fiber, 6 g sugar, 3 g protein.

