

Wholesome Food

The word 'wholesome' is defined as, "good for you, and likely to benefit you physically, morally, and emotionally.," by the Cambridge Dictionary online. The word has come to represent something that has a full capacity of being good, and when it is coupled with the word 'food' as in, 'wholesome food,' it immediately triggers in many people's mind pictures of balanced meals, natural foods, and healthy options. Now more than ever people are keenly interested in and invested in supplying their bodies with 'wholesome foods.'" Research as well as personal testimonies abound online telling us how the choice to consume wholesome has both directly and indirectly resulted in wholesome living, which can be defined as, "helping to keep or improve the good condition of the mind, body, or spirit." People no longer just want to live long: they want to live well longer. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine why athletes would be even more attentive to what they consume in order that their choices would lead to better performances and records in their chosen fields. I have had my journey of "junk-to-wholesome" food, and my involvement with swimming has had a great impact in my pursuit to live my life physically, morally, and emotionally well.

Like many kids, I was a picky eater, only choosing and fussing to eat certain foods that I favored. The variety was not wide, and my taste palette seemed to reject foods that were unfamiliar to me. So this diet consisted of rice, seasoned and dried seaweed, eggs, potatoes, and of course occasional sweets. With this very protein-lacking menu, I was still full of energy - more than my parents could handle - and I had no complaints. When I started to swim competitively in seventh grade, my friends and coaches were amused that I had energy to swim even with my low-protein diet. It was not until my freshman year in high school that I had to seriously reconsider my food choices. I realized and experienced how my selective diet was no longer fueling my body correctly and that I needed to make some serious changes. As I trained my body to swim faster in the swim lanes and fight better in the water polo pools, I also had to retrain my taste buds and be explorative with foods. This was more challenging than I had initially anticipated. However, I was making strides in adding variety to my diet as I became more accustomed to whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, and vegetables. Moreover, I learned about the importance of hydration and started to drink more water throughout the day.

As I began to implement these changes into my diet, I started to notice significant improvements in my overall health and wellbeing. I had even more energy (Sorry, Mom!) and felt less fatigued during my training sessions. My parents were the first to notice that I recovered more quickly after each session, as I complained less and less about my sore muscles.

Swimming and competing in varsity swim and water polo from my Sophomore year, my healthy eating habits became a way of life for me. My cravings for unhealthy foods lessened, and I began to enjoy the taste and energy boost that came from consuming wholesome foods. Not only that, I also noticed a positive impact that my healthy diet had on my mental health. I felt more confident, focused, and clear-headed. I could sense that not only my body but my brain as well was being fueled and supported properly. These days, I am more conscious and selective of what I eat. I want to become a responsible and moral eater, choosing products that come

from farms, companies, and local stores that practice social responsibility in the way they handle, treat, and process their foods. In this way, I am more confident that my health and wellbeing is not causing any person or animal undue harm that can be avoided.

There is no doubt that I have benefited from consuming wholesome foods, in many ways. The foods we eat can have a significant impact on our physical as well as emotional health. By consuming wholesome foods, we can improve our energy levels, enhance our immune system and help prevent chronic diseases.