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Gain Weight To Gain Strength

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Should young (9 to 11 years old) male swimmers try to gain weight to gain strength? If so, what is the best way?

No, young male swimmers in this age range should not be too concerned with increasing their muscle mass to increase strength. Until they reach puberty, usually between 12 and 15 years of age, young men cannot increase their muscle mass rapidly because of the lack of the male hormone testosterone. However, studies have shown that with the appropriate weight-training program prepubescent boys can significantly increase their strength, despite the lack of muscle growth. The primary reason for this is that strength is regulated by factors other than muscle size -- namely, various neurological controls that are influenced by weight training.

For more detailed information on this subject, write to the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA), Box 81418, Lincoln, NE, 68501, and ask for the position paper titled "Prepubescent Strength Training." This paper discusses benefits and risks of strength training and gives guidelines for a good program.

Additionally, ASCA sells a book written by two very well respected sports physiologists and published by Human Kinetics entitled "Strength Training For Young Athletes." This book directly address the concerns of parents and coaches regarding strength training for young athletes, dispels the myths, and offers correct advice for properly administering a dryland training program. The book is available here:

https://www.swimmingcoach.org/ecom/store/comersus_viewItem.asp?idProduct=20