

NUTRITION CORNER



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A healthy eating plan is important for all athletes, but can vary depending on the type of activity. For those involved in endurance sports such as running, what you eat before, during, and after your event can significantly impact your performance.

The pre-exercise meal should focus on carbohydrate rich foods and fluids. This will help to restore liver glycogen and increase muscle glycogen stores. Eating a healthy meal prior to exercise will also help prevent hunger during your event.

Whole grains, such as whole wheat bread, toast, cereal or granola, and fruit such as bananas are great pre-competition "carbs." When deciding when to eat before your event be sure to give yourself adequate time for digestion. A good rule of thumb is to allow 3-4 hours for a large meal to digest, 2-3 hours for a small meal, and 1-2 hours for a small snack or liquid meal. Be sure to experiment with pre-exercise eating before the day of your event to ensure tolerance, and remember, you may be a little nervous on competition day which can impact your food tolerance.

During exercise, fluid replacement should be your number one priority. For events lasting longer than 1 hour consuming carbohydrates such as those found in sports drinks, bars, or gels, can increase your stamina and lead to a positive impact on performance.

The post exercise meal is crucial for restoring muscle and liver glycogen. Without adequate carbohydrate intake after strenuous activity recovery time can increase, future performance can suffer, and you may be putting yourself at higher risk for injury. Timing is important; the post exercise meal should be eaten immediately after exercise with 1-1.2 g (carbohydrate)/kg (body weight) of carbohydrate consumed every hour up to 4 hours after exercise. Whole grain breads, cereals, granola bars, and fresh or dried fruit are great sources of carbohydrate. Protein is also an important part of the recovery meal as it aids in the repair and rebuilding of muscle, so add some peanut butter to your bread, or enjoy a turkey sandwich.

A couple of minerals deserve special mention when it comes to runners. Iron is used to transport oxygen around the body. If you have low iron, less oxygen is able to be transported leading to fatigue and decreased endurance. Be sure to include good sources of iron in your diet such as lean meats, iron-fortified breads and cereals, and green leafy vegetables. Eating foods rich in vitamin C helps increase the absorption of iron, try drinking orange juice with your toast or add some red peppers to your salad.

Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body and is crucial for bone health. Stress fractures are common in runners and may partially result from inadequate calcium. Dairy products such as skim or 1% milk, yogurt, and cheese are great sources. Other good sources of calcium can be found in almonds, tofu, and green leafy vegetables like broccoli, bok choy and collards.

What you eat, and when you eat plays a crucial role in training and performance. Eat well to run well!!



TIP:

CONSUMING CARBOHYDRATES IMMEDIATELY AFTER STRENUOUS ACTIVITY HELPS RESTORE MUSCLE AND LIVER GLYCOGEN. BRING ALONG A BANANA, SOME CRACKERS, OR A GRANOLA BAR TO YOUR NEXT TRAINING SESSION SO YOU DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS CRUCIAL RECOVERY BOOST.