

# Yo Riders!!!

First of all, all our riders, especially those of you getting ready for your ALC, have impressed us, your Training Ride Leaders, with your great attitudes, your dedication and your wonderful smiles. We realized today that while we've been stressing most aspects of bike safety, we left out a very important one... nutrition. Nutrition is essential to doing these rides, so let's go over a few basic things you need to know.

## ***Before you ride***

That big pasta dinner the night before you ride is so last year! Top trainers and sports nutritionists want you to load up on *complex* carbs, (whole grains, fruits and veggies) along with lean proteins. Why? Complex carbs are less caloric, more filling and stay with you longer. So the night before a ride, forget the pasta and potatoes and dig into brown rice, green veggies and fresh fruits.

The morning you ride, be sure to eat a real breakfast with plenty of carbohydrates. Oatmeal, cereal, toast, pancakes and fruits are all great sources of the short term energy carbohydrates provide. Try to eat a couple of hours before you head out so you don't feel bloated and slowed down by a full stomach.

## ***As you ride***

**FEAR THE BONK!** What is the bonk? That's when your muscles have used up their supply glycogen – the sugar that propels them – and your body has literally run out of fuel like a car runs out of gas. You're weak. Every pedal stroke is painful. You feel like crap and you can go **BATSHIT CRAZY.\***

But here's a little known fact. Your body is NOT a car. A car can take on five or six hours worth of fuel in a few minutes. Your body can only absorb a gram of carbohydrates a minute. It can only absorb a quart of water an hour. (You can drink more, but it will go right to your bladder.) That's why you can't wait to the end of your ride to refuel. You have to keep eating and drinking as you go. The American College Of Sports Medicine recommends 30-60 grams of carbohydrates per hour of exercise.

There are lots of ways to do this. Every 15 or 20 minutes, take a bite of a Power Bar or eat a Clif Shot Blok or gobble down a handful of trail mix. There are Gu's and gels and bananas and all kinds of good, healthy fuel that fits in your jersey pocket and will keep your muscles happy. I have a timer on my bike computer that reminds me every twenty minutes to eat and drink.

\*The first time I bonked, (training for my first AIDS Ride) I threw my beautiful, expensive, brand new, custom-built bike down in the middle of the street and stormed off in anger, determined never to ride again. It didn't even occur to me that I was 25 miles from my car. Luckily a friend came by with some gels and got me sugared up and calmed down and my love affair with cycling continues to this day.



### ***After you ride***

**RECOVER RIGHT!** Ever hear the term glycemic window? That's the 20-30 minute window of opportunity you have to properly refuel your body after a ride. Sports nutritionists say that if you gulp down foods with a 4:1 ratio of simple carbs (sugars and starches) to protein, your body will replace its stores of glycogen – the stuff that fuels your muscles – within hours instead of days. Recovery's especially important since you're getting ready to ride your bike for 7 straight days! (Actually, there are really no straight days on the ALC, but that's another topic for another time.)

So what foods have this magic carb to protein ratio? All the companies that market sports nutrition make special recovery drinks that work wonderfully, but a pint of low-fat chocolate milk will do the job. Even beer – yes, good old beer – is a great recovery drink as long as you supplement it with a little protein and you don't have to drive home from your ride.

### ***Drink right:***

This June I'll be participating in my 17<sup>th</sup> AIDS Ride and every year, at the First Aid stations and the medical tents, I see people lying on cots while IV saline drips into their arms because they've allowed themselves to become dehydrated or hyponatremic. Everybody knows hydration's important when your body's working hard, but you need more from those bottles on your bike than just plain H<sup>2</sup>O. You need...

**ELECTROLYTE REPLACEMENT** Let's start with the reason you need to keep drinking when you ride. It's called SWEATING. In order to cool itself, your body releases water through the pores of your skin. As that water evaporates, it cools you off.

**BUT SWEAT IS NOT JUST WATER.** Did you ever notice it's salty? That's 'cause it contains electrolytes, chemical salts your muscles need to function. When you sweat, you not only lose water, you also lose these electrolytes and without them, your muscles can't work and your heart can't beat.

So whatever you put in your bottle **MUST HAVE ELECTROLYTES**. There are dozens of different products that will keep your blood chemistry in balance. I drink Cytomax and Skratch Labs Hydration Mix, but you may prefer Accelerade or Clif Shot or Hammer Nutrition Heed or even good old Gatorade. Hammer also makes electrolyte capsules you can swallow as you pedal down the road. And a company called Elete sells electrolyte drops you can add to your water. If you look on-line, you can even find recipes to make your own electrolyte replacement drinks.

**PLEASE TAKE THIS NEXT PART VERY SERIOUSLY:** I mentioned hyponatremia a while back. It's when you've gulped down so much water that you've flushed the electrolytes from your bloodstream. This is much more dangerous than dehydration. You know those news stories about people dropping dead on marathons? Hyponatremia is often the cause. We came very close to losing a dear friend on the Paul Hulse/Positive Pedalers' Century a few years back to hyponatremia. She made it, but she was in the hospital for two weeks.



**IF YOU TAKE ANTI-DEPRESSANTS** belonging to the SSRI family (**S**elective **S**erotonin **R**e-uptake **I**nhibitors like Celexa, Paxil, Zoloft or Lexapro) your risk of hyponatremia goes way up so make doubly sure you pour lots of electrolytes in your bottles. (And, be sure to mention it on your ALC medical form.)

### **CRAMPS**

No, I'm not talking about the band that recorded *Bikini Girls With Machine Guns*. I'm talking about the cramps you can get in your legs from long hours on the bike. They hurt and, guess what, you can prevent them.

- Make sure your bike fits. I tell everybody I know that fit is everything when it comes to bikes. If you're going to invest hundreds or even thousands in a bicycle, invest another \$150 in getting it fit to your body. If you need the name of a good bike fitter, get in touch with me, [casey@teamventura.org](mailto:casey@teamventura.org) and I'll set you up. I know fitters who give discounts to ALC riders and who do a wonderful job. If you can't afford a pro, I'll be glad to take a look at your bike fit. I don't pretend to be an expert, but I can probably get you more comfortable. ALSO... there's usually a bike fitter on the AIDS/LifeCycle. If you bring your bike to the bike tech area at the Cow Palace real early on Day Zero, (Saturday, May 31) you can probably get a pro fitting for free.
- Stretch before you ride and when you take a break. Stretch those quads and those hammies. Stretch your Achilles tendons. Go on Google or Youtube and search for bicycle stretches.

And if all else fails and you do cramp up, eat some Tums. They're loaded with calcium and magnesium and seem to quiet down those cramps.

**PLEASE REMEMBER...** your TRL's are here to help. We not only lead rides, we council you on training, nutrition and fundraising. As the ride gets closer and you start getting anxious, we're available for encouragement and hand holding. **YOU CAN DO THIS**, and we're here to help.

