

## Nutrition Recommendations to Improve Athletic Performance

### Nutrition

Food can be simplified into three broad categories: **carbohydrates, proteins, and fats**. Through digestion we convert food into nutrients, vitamins and minerals, which we use as energy...our fuel. Each of these energy sources is essential to ones health and well-being, and finding the right balance can make a dramatic difference. As athletes, your needs are unique.

Carbohydrates	Rice, whole grain bread, beans, sweet potatoes, yams, potatoes (Vegetables and fruits are essential too!)
Fats	Avocado, coconut oil, olive oil, grass fed butter, nuts
Protein	Meat, fish, poultry (And to a lesser extent: nuts and seeds, eggs, beans, yogurt, nut butters, etc.)

**Carbohydrates** are our body's primary source of quick energy. When competing in a 5K race at maximum capacity, a runner derives MOST of his or her energy from carbohydrates (and a small portion from fats). As such, the types of carbohydrates you choose to eat and when you choose to eat them is important.

### Not All Carbohydrates Are Created Equal: The Good and The Bad

#### **The Bad – simple, refined carbohydrates**

Simple carbohydrates are found in soft drinks, candy bars, white breads, pizza, pastries, etc. These carbohydrates aren't a good source of energy because they also have a high percentage of modified fats and unnatural sugars. They also don't have vitamins and minerals your body needs to make fuel for both your body and your mind. Rather than feeling prepared on race day one might feel *tired* if eating simple carbohydrates on race (and training) days.

#### **The Good – whole, unprocessed grains and fruits**

Good sources of complex carbohydrates include whole grains, whole grain bread, vegetables, fruits, and beans.

Certain fruits, such as bananas, oranges, apples, and raisins, break down into fructose (a natural sugar), which we will consider a good carbohydrate that would be beneficial for a runner instead of sports drinks (Gatorade, Powerade, fruit juice, etc.) that are riddled with sweeteners and other fake sugars.

## **When and What to Eat After Your Run**

### **Within 30 Minutes After:**

Recovery following the race is just as important as preparation. Rehydrate immediately with 20-32 ounces of one of the drinks mentioned above. Replenishing with a good electrolyte replacement afterward helps prevent soreness and injuries by providing nutrition necessary for repair. Electrolytes, especially salt, prevent heat cramps and dehydration.

After exercise and properly warming down your body begins the process of recovery. At least 20g of protein with some carbohydrates provide your body the fuel it needs to repair broken down muscles.

The worst choices you can make after a race are snacks such as cookies, crackers, chips, and sodas. Your replacement snacks would be best to be natural, whole foods, our body is better suited to digest and utilize.

An athlete who eats properly following a workout has an advantage over those who don't. If you've felt bad or sore the day after a race, take a good look at what you ate before and after the workout/race.

### **HYDRATE!!! A LOT. More than you think.**

No matter if you're thirsty or not, ALL cross-country runners need to drink at least 12 glasses of water daily and more on particularly hot days.

→ Keep a water container (NOT PLASTIC!) with you throughout the day.

→ Sports and electrolyte drinks can be great. Check the labels to avoid sugars, agave, and especially high fructose corn syrup

**Avoid sports drinks during the day.** Instead, save them for before and after workouts to avoid ingesting excess sugar. Overloading on sugar can lead to blood sugar dysregulation and an increase in energy peaks and valleys.

If you are thirsty it means you are already dehydrated. As such, staying on top of your fluid intake is paramount.

Lastly, and of equal importance, getting adequate sleep is vital. As a high school athlete 8-10 hours of sleep is important VERY night. Having a consistent time to go to sleep and wake as well as a completely dark room free of excess noise is helpful. Avoid time in front of a screen (TV, computer, ipad, etc.) at least 1 hour before going to sleep.

For any questions, concerns, or natural sports medicine appointments please call the Live Well Clinic at 760.771.5970 or find us on the web at [www.livewellclinic.org](http://www.livewellclinic.org)

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## When and What to Eat Before Your Run

### **Dinner the Evening Before:**

Carb loading is a common practice for cross-country athletes. Team spaghetti dinners can be great for team building and physical preparation in advance of a race.

Consider skipping dessert and greasy foods the night before a race. Further, beverages like coffee and soda may disrupt one's sleep.

Digestion is vital. Avoid food within 3 hours of bedtime and never overeat.

### **Breakfast the Day of:**

This meal is large and hearty. Getting appropriate diversity is essential. Begin the morning with at least 16 ounces of water immediately upon waking. The following are some considerations:

→ 2-3 eggs with 1-2 handfuls of sautéed vegetables, whole grain toast with nut butter (peanut, almond, sunflower), and ½ an avocado.

→ Smoothie: berries, spinach/kale, a good protein powder, nut milk (almond, hazelnut), and a tbsp of coconut oil.

### **2-4 Hours Before Workout/Race – Eat A Light Meal:**

→ Protein bar (Kind bar, Cliff bar) – avoid bars high in sugar and other fillers

→ Nuts, seeds, and fruit

→ Smoothie: berries, spinach/kale, a good protein powder, nut milk (almond, hazelnut), and a tbsp of coconut oil.

### **1 Hour Before Workout/Race:**

→ Yogurt

→ Fruit

→ Fig bars

### **30 Minutes Before:**

Drink a small amount (less than 6oz) of electrolyte replacement drink.

→ HEED

→ Pure Encapsulations Electrolyte/Energy Formula

→ Vega Sport Electrolyte Hydrator

→ Hammer Endurolytes Fizz

→ Coconut water

### **TIP for NERVOUS TUMMY:**

→ If you have a nervous stomach before a race, consider a liquid snack prior to workout. Liquid snacks such as smoothies or electrolyte drinks are easier to digest.

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