

Nutrition Basics for Half Marathon Runners

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Why is Nutrition Important for Endurance Athletes?

- Health and Disease Prevention
- Weight Control
- Immune Function
- Training

Optimal nutrition is the most commonly overlooked training component!

- Performance
- Recovery

Common Mistakes

1. Not Eating ENOUGH CARBOHYDRATES
2. Not Eating ENOUGH CALORIES
3. Inadequate FUEL During the Run
4. Not Consuming a RECOVERY Meal
5. Improper HYDRATION
6. Not Consuming ENOUGH Electrolytes

#1 Goal of Training: Increase Performance/Endurance

- Progressive increase in miles w/ periods of rest allows the muscles to adapt:
- More efficient use of fat
- Increased glycogen stores
- Produce more energy

Optimal nutrition before, during and after a run will:

- Increased nutrient stores
- Allow muscles to repair and become stronger
- Increased and sustained energy production

Carbohydrates

- Converted into Glucose
- Main supplier of energy for endurance athletes
- Limited storage
- Glycogen: enhanced with training, proper diet and Carb loading

Carbohydrates

Choose these more often

- Fruits: Aim for at least 3 cups
- Vegetables: Aim for 2-3 cups
- Potatoes
- Whole grains
- Rice esp. brown rice
- Breads esp. whole-wheat
- Bagels, oatmeal, cereals
- Crackers, popcorn, pretzels
- Pasta

Choose these less often

- Refined
- Soda
- Fruit punch
- Added sugar
- Cookies, donuts, cake
- White flour/breads
- Candy
- Processed foods with corn syrup/high fructose corn syrup

Protein

Choose these more often

- Animal based
- Skinless chicken, turkey
- Lean beef or pork
- Eggs
- Low-fat or Fat-free dairy
- Low-fat cheeses
- Fish and Seafood
- Plant Based
- Beans and legumes

Tofu

Nuts

Choose these less often

- Bacon
- Whole and 2% Dairy
- Regular cheeses
- Chicken/Turkey with the skin
- Fatty cuts of beef
- Hot dogs
- Processed Meats

Fat

Choose these more often

- Plant based
- Olive oil
- Canola oil
- Peanut oil
- Avocados
- Nuts and seeds

Choose these less often

- Butter
- Lard
- Fast Food
- Processed foods
- Ice-cream
- Trans fats
- Processed foods
- Saturated fats
- Fatty cuts of meat and full fat dairy products

Fiber Tips

- Fiber is good for you, but not before a run....
- Eat high fiber foods on rest and cross training days
- Eat high fiber foods after a run
- Avoid fiber rich foods several hours before a run

The Night Before

- Eat a regular high carbohydrate meal
- Be careful when eating out
- Choose pasta dishes made with tomato based sauces, avoid white or pink sauces
- Add some lean protein and a salad to round out the meal
- Experiment with potatoes, rice, bread you might tolerate these better than pasta

Pre-Run Meal

- Improves performance (this means your runs will be easier and faster)
- Best to eat 3-4 hours prior to exercise
- Provide energy for your run (you should not be hungry nor have undigested food in your stomach)
- Low fat
- Low fiber
- High carbohydrate
- Moderate protein
- Familiar foods
- Palatable and well tolerated
- Individualize
- Experiment during training with different foods and timing of this meal
- Goal is to find the best method for you

During the Run

- For exercise lasting >1hr
- Consume carbohydrate to maintain Blood glucose
- 30-60g Carbs/hr = 100-200 calories = 1-2 Gu's = 16-32oz Sports Drink
- Once you start you must continue
- For long runs only
- Training run: initiate at about 90 min and continue every 15-20 min
- Race day: you may want to start this at the 1hr mark and continue every 15-20 min

Post-Run Meal

- Recovery, Recovery, Recovery
- Maximizes Glycogen Storage
- After long runs lasting >90 min
- IMMEDIATELY 100 g carbs (400 calories)
- Additional 150g Carbohydrate/Kg 2 hours later (600 calories)
- Adding protein may stimulate muscle repair and enhance glycogen storage
- ~3 or 4:1 ratio of carbohydrate to protein (25 g Protein to 100 g carbohydrates 500 calories)

Fluid Recommendations

- Adequate hydration critical
- #1 reason for fatigue and decreased performance

- Even small losses will decrease endurance
- 2-4% of body weight loss will significantly decrease performance (3-7 pound weight loss)
- Increased risk of injury with dehydration

Tips for Fluid Intake

- DO NOT RELY ON THIRST
- Once you feel thirsty you are already in a 4-8oz deficit
- During the run
- Drink to prevent dehydration
- Small frequent sips
- Sports drinks will meet fluid, electrolyte and carbohydrate needs
- Carry fluids with you, especially if you have trouble tolerating them
- Carry fluids with you daily
- Water is fine, but flavored beverages may encourage intake
- Watch out for excessive calories, stick with low/no calorie beverages
- Replace fluids lost during activity: weigh yourself

Be VERY liberal with your salt and sodium intake

Training in the summer in RVA, we can lose 3g of sodium an hour!

Carbohydrate Loading

- Benefit is only for endurance activities lasting >90mins
- Progressive increase in carbohydrate intake as you taper your training
- Word of caution, you may gain weight, but this is water weight and will be temporary

For private consultations, please email Paula Inserra at paulainserra@yahoo.com