

## Running – Fuelling and Nutrition for Training

Training nutrition should be focused around a couple of basic principles; Eating enough to fuel for and recover from your runs and maintaining healthy weight while avoiding injury. The food you eat every day should fuel your daily activities, getting up, dropping the kids off, going to work etc. When you run you need to make sure you increase your calorie intake to put back in what you burn, the longer the run the more you need to eat.

A healthy training diet should contain all three macronutrient groups; protein, carbohydrate and fats. They are all essential for healthy function and our requirements for them increase as we stress our bodies more.

Protein – “The building blocks of our body”. Responsible for the growth and repair of our cells, muscle protein synthesis and immune function

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From here we can make small changes to the exact ratios until you find what works best for you. Our exact calorie requirement will be down to individual body composition, weight and daily activity levels. The easiest way to calculate how much and what you should be eating is consistency. By being consistent you can then make small changes and see how it affects your energy levels, recovery and body weight and work out a diet that suits you.

## Running – Fuelling for Racing

Thankfully endurance nutrition has come a long way since forcing down a large bowl of pasta the night before. So here's a few tips on what you can be doing over race week and during a race to make sure you're fuelled effectively.

Don't drastically change your diet prior to a race or try in a race what you've never practised in training. You need time to test how certain foods make you feel to be sure they'll work for you and not leave you with any gastric problems mid race!

Reduce high fibre foods the day before and on race day to ensure you don't have to take any unscheduled pit stops.

Most people are aware of "carb up" before races. However assuming your diet is already enough to recover from your training, then just by tapering your training before a race while keeping your food intake the same will replenish your muscle energy supplies without the need to stuff yourself. Overeating before a race could leave you feeling bloated and even add a little weight.

The race distance will determine how much energy you consume, the longer the event the more energy you need. For events lasting up to an hour we are unlikely to run out of energy, so regular nutrition though the week should see you through. If you think about the marathon, around the 3 hour mark is when you hear about people 'hitting the wall'. So for longer races you'll need to think about how you can consume energy on the go. When running the easiest way to do this is through liquids or gels as they're easier to consume and usually cause less stomach issues.

Practising during your longer training runs will allow you to work out for yourself at what point you feel you are feeling low on energy and what types of sports nutrition work for you. There are various online calculators that you can use, but ultimately our individual body compositions and fitness levels will mean we have different requirements. If you use with 1g of carbohydrate per Kg of bodyweight as a starting point, you can then fine tune it to your needs.

## Running – Warming up & Stretching

What is warming up? Well put simply warming up is the process of preparing our bodies for exercise. This *movement preparation* will allow us to move more efficiently, which from a performance point of view is preferable. More efficient movement also puts less stress on joints which contributes to lower injury risk. Flexibility is the combination of mobility and stability, so being bendy is pointless without the ability to control it. Here are three types of commonly used flexibility work and where they can be used:

1. **Static stretching:** moving our joints into a lengthened position until we feel a stretch and holding. While this will lengthen a muscle and allow greater range of motion, it does not allow a nervous system adaptation to the movement and as such we are not stabilising. This lack of awareness can actually increase injury risk in explosive movements e.g. stretching out hamstrings before performing lots of kicking movements. Static stretching is best used where poor joint mobility prevents proper movement. Once you've achieved the mobility though, you should then follow this up with dynamic stretching or light movement to allow the body to re-learn the joints new movement.
2. **Dynamic stretching:** Repeatedly taking a joint or joints through a full, stabilised range of motion without external force. If we continue with the hamstring example you could slowly bow from the waist towards the floor until you felt a hamstring stretch and then return to the upright position, repeating this and gently moving further each time until you feel no greater increase in range.
3. **Foam rolling/Tissue release:** Using objects like foam rollers, massage sticks, you can mobilise muscle tissue without lengthening it. By releasing tension in tissue around joints you can improve mobility and overall movement. A very common one is mobilisation of the Ilio-tibial band (ITB) on the side of the thigh as restricted movement here can cause incorrect movement of the knee, damaging the cartilage.

A combination of balance, flexibility and strength will ensure your bodies are as prepared as possible for sport.

## Running – Avoiding Injury

Injuries may be classified into either Intrinsic or Extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are usually biomechanical, including; poor run gait, flexibility issues, muscular imbalances & poor movement patterns. When people develop injuries when there's been no trigger event it's usually as a result of the above. Small biomechanical problems can go unnoticed, eventually cropping up after many miles when the damage has been done. These are all learned behaviours that can be corrected with physiotherapy, coaching and strength & conditioning work.

Extrinsic factors are ones that occur outside the body such as; equipment, clothing/footwear and environmental factors. In contact sports this would also include other players. Although extrinsic factors are more difficult to control you can minimise the risk by assessing your clothing and equipment and taking precautions when necessary depending on environmental risks. This is particularly important when training over the colder months, where appropriate clothing is essential and the ground may be more slippery underfoot.

Avoiding injuries from intrinsic factors is also key to performance as improved biomechanics, strength and efficiency will not only reduce injury but see you run faster for the same effort. A well rounded training routine should include mobilisation and soft tissue release work combined with an exercise routine aimed at improving posture, hip knee and ankle stability as well as muscular endurance. This training will add to your robustness as an athlete ensuring that you move healthily and perform well. Your run sessions should also be specific to the type of runner you are and your ability. Key sessions include base training runs, hills and speed work in the lead up to races. Perhaps the sessions I see performed the least which every runner could benefit from doing more is running drills. These improve running cadence, foot striking, posture and make for a more efficient running style.

Take away tips:

- Make time for flexibility and strength work
- Be wise with clothing choices and replace your shoes regularly
- Plan your training to allow progression with adequate recovery

## Running – Staying Healthy

Staying healthy might sound obvious and maybe easy. But we should all be paying more attention to how we can maintain our health because it'll be heart breaking to put in all those training miles only to be struck with illness before a race or pick up an injury through over training or poor technique. So what can we be doing to make sure we look after our health?

Reduced the chances of illness and disease by reducing or eliminating risk factors associated with poor health such as smoking, alcohol consumption, processed foods, over exposure to UV rays from training outside for many hours a year. Having a suitable nutrition plan in place is also key. Good nutrition is about more than eating to fuel your workouts, it's about getting the right balance of protein, fats and carbohydrates to supply your body with energy, maintain healthy immune function and repair damage to the body from training. Our diet is also important for micronutrient intake, the vitamins and minerals we need for healthy immune function, enzyme function, maintaining cells such as bones and blood cells through calcium and iron, as well as muscle contraction.

Your training program should include mobility, stability and strength & conditioning work specific to running. Improving joint function, posture and execution of movements and exercises will increase your efficiency and reduce injuries from poor technique. Where necessary use qualified coaches and physios to iron out your technique and correct any joint problems. Periodising your training to allow sufficient rest and recovery time between sessions as well as reduced volume weeks every 4-5 weeks will help prevent overtraining.

When it comes to recovery it's well worth investing in good recovery. Regular sports massage will not only aid in recovery and help maintain your joints and muscles, but your massage therapist will get to know your body and be able to point out when your body is feeling particularly fatigued or may even spot underlying issues before they become a problem. Finally the easiest way to maintain good health and ensure suitable recovery from training is to make sure we get enough sleep. This is when we repair and recover. It's arguably our most valuable recovery tool so don't under value it.

## Running – Preparing for race day

The training is done and race week is here. So what can you do to make sure you have the race you want? Whether you're aiming for a PB or just trying to get around the course, the preparation in this final phase is key. In the lead up to a race you should taper your training down to allow recovery, the length of time you do this over depends on the type and length of race you're competing in and your experience as a runner. Longer races typically require a longer taper, e.g. the marathon you'd probably do your longest training run around 3 weeks out, where as a 5 k race might only need a day or two lower volume. More experienced runners and those used to a high weekly training volume will not fatigue as easily and therefore will be able to keep their training level fairly high leading right up to an event.

Nutrition during race week is important but needn't be difficult. For a start, consistency is key, don't do anything during race week or even a race that you've never tried in training. Stick to foods that you have been eating during your training and that you've felt fuelled you well for your runs.

Over the last week and especially in the two days leading up to race day consistent hydration is very important, as you don't want to be desperately chugging water on race morning. Race week is also a good time to cut out alcohol completely, cut down on refined sugars; chocolates, sweets etc. and make sure you get a full nights sleep. Use this week to check your kit; shoes, comfortable running clothing, clean and ready, race number, GPS charged (if needed), race fuelling planned and purchased ready. Plan ahead of time your route to the race start, where you can leave your kit, where the toilets are etc. The more you can plan ahead the less you'll have to worry about on the day. Have this all done and you'll go into your race knowing you've given yourself the best chance of achieving what you set out to do.

## Cycling – Fuelling & Nutrition for Training

Training nutrition should be focused around the principles of eating enough to fuel for and recover from your rides while maintaining healthy weight while avoiding injury. The food you eat every day should fuel your daily activities, getting up, dropping the kids off, going to work etc. Further demand for energy from cycling should be catered for by increasing your caloric intake.

A healthy training diet should contain all three macronutrient groups; protein, carbohydrate and fats. They are all essential for healthy function and our requirements for them increase as we stress our bodies more.

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Fats – “Health & vitality”. Used for transporting vitamins and minerals around the body, maintain cell structure and can be used as a fuel source.

We will all have slightly different requirements, but as a good starting point those undertaking endurance type training should aim for the following daily macronutrient ratios:

Protein – 30 %

Fat – 20 %

Carbohydrate – 50 %

Small variation between meals and from day to day are expect with any varied diet, so look at the bigger picture and see how your diet pans out over the week. From here we can make small changes to the exact ratios until you find what works best for you. Our exact calorie requirement will be down to individual body composition, weight and daily activity levels. The easiest way to calculate how much and what you should be eating is consistency. By being consistent you can then make small changes and see how it affects your energy levels, recovery and body weight and work out a diet that suits you. Accurately tracking your rides and workouts will give you a clearer idea of how much every you’re expending and how much you should be putting back in. You can calculate this with power meters or HR training.

## Cycling – Fuelling for Racing

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Don't drastically change your diet prior to a race or try in a race what you've never practised in training. You need time to test how certain foods make you feel to be sure they'll work for you and not leave you with any gastric problems mid race! Reducing high fibre foods the day before and on race day may help you avoid any unscheduled pit stops.

The race distance will determine how much energy you consume, the longer the event the more energy you need. For events lasting up to 90 min we are unlikely to run out of energy, so regular nutrition though the week combined with tapering off your training should see you through. Cycle events tend to be longer, however the energy demand slightly lower than running. For any race distance hydration is key. You should look to consume between 500-750 ml per hour depending on your size and how hard you're working. Environmental conditions such as hilly courses & high temperatures will probably have you reaching for the water bottle more frequently. Beware not to over hydrate though, drink to quench thirst.

Options for fuelling while cycling are more varied than most sports because of the larger storage capacity on bottle cages, top-tube bags and pockets. The seated position also makes it easier to consume foods with less chances of gastric issues than when running. Most bikes can carry two water bottles, and even on shorter rides it can be good to have two drink sources even if you use smaller bottles or don't fill them. Firstly you can have different drinks in them; water, electrolytes, carbohydrate drinks and in the event that you lose a bottle you're not left without water.

You can take on carbohydrates in either liquid form (easy to consume, fast working), solids; fruit, bars (slower release energy, sate appetite) or gels (high density calories, fast & slow release energy). While many prefer to eat more natural foods when riding as it sits better in the stomach sometimes it can be tricky to do this without stopping. Practising your sports nutrition is the only way to find out what works for you.

## Triathlon – Fuelling & Nutrition for Training

Training nutrition should be focused around a couple of basic principles; Eating enough to fuel for and recover from training sessions and maintaining healthy weight while avoiding injury. The food you eat every day should fuel your daily activities; getting up, dropping the kids off, going to work etc. When you train you need to make sure you increase your calorie intake to put back in what you burn, which will differ depending on the type of session you are doing.

A healthy training diet should contain all three macronutrient groups; protein, carbohydrate and fats. They are all essential for healthy function and our requirements for them increase as we stress our bodies more.

Protein – “The building blocks of our body”. Responsible for the growth and repair of our cells, muscle protein synthesis and immune function

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Fats – “Health & vitality”. Used for transporting vitamins and minerals around the body, maintain cell structure and can be used as a fuel source.

As a good starting point we should aim for the following daily macronutrient ratios, which may be adjusted to suit your individual requirements depending on what you feel leaves you feeling more recovered and ready to train again.

Protein – 30 %

Fat – 20 %

Carbohydrate – 50 %

The easiest way to calculate how much and what you should be eating is by being consistent. Then make small changes to see how it affects your energy levels, recovery and body weight to work out a diet that suits you. Sessions under 90 min aren’t likely to require nutritional aids beyond hydration. Recovery nutrition from training sessions will depend on the discipline you’ve been doing. Swimming, biking and running use different amounts of calories per minute, usually increasing in that order. Other factors such as the duration and intensity of the session and your ability and skill level will determine how much energy you use and therefore need to put back in. Tracking your workouts will help you do this more accurately. Especially as many heartrate and GPS devices can now be linked with nutrition apps to calculate extra calorie requirement.

## Triathlon – Fuelling for Racing

In the week leading up to the race you should be reducing your training volume, therefore maintaining your calorie intake will result in a surplus that will fill your muscle stores. For sprints and Olympic distance races this may be enough. Even for longer races you cannot consume too much beyond this anyway as there's a limit to what your muscles and liver can store. The day before a race stick to foods that are easier for the body to digest; more simple carbohydrates, chicken fish etc.

A small but suitable race day breakfast will top up your energy levels, bring down your stress hormone levels and promotes energy delivery to the muscles. To aid easy digestion stick to simple foods like honey/jam/nut butter on toast, granola, and fruit. Use early morning training sessions to practise.

It's rare that you'll need to worry about fuelling in the swim, so all of your fuelling will be done on the bike and run. Because it's both easier to carry and consume fuel on the bike you can over fuel towards the end of the bike to help you through the first stage of the run. Carrying two Bottles Gives you the option of different drinks; water, electrolytes, carbohydrate drinks and in the event that you lose a bottle you're not left without water. You should look to consume between 500-750 ml per hour depending on your size, sweat rate and how hard you're working. Environmental conditions such as hilly courses & high temperatures will probably have you reaching for the water bottle more frequently Beware not to over hydrate though, drink to quench thirst.

The easiest options for fast fuelling are carbohydrate drinks and gels. In longer races solid foods may be more palatable and help sate appetite. Find out what nutrition is available at your race and work this into your planning. Usually on the bike course you must be self-sufficient however nutrition stations on the run may help you fuel without the need to carry any extra nutrition. Practising your sports nutrition is the only way to find out what works for you.

## New Year, New You - take on a challenge in 2015

It's a new year, and you're looking to make a positive step towards improving your health and fitness. So what do you do, join a gym, unwrap the exercise DVD sitting on the shelf, or maybe go for a run? Although it does look a little cold out there, maybe you should run later, right? Making a change doesn't have to be seen as this monumental task. The first step towards change is just that, a step. A single step is all it takes to start walking. Don't wait for tomorrow to take that step, if you want to make a change, just do it.

All you have to do to be fitter and healthier than you are now is to move more than you do now. So if that starts with walking then do that! Incorporate small changes in to your day; get off the train or bus one stop early and walk, take the stairs. Have less sugar in your coffee, have a smaller size, try somewhere new for lunch. Small changes add up.

If you decide you want to exercise with friends or in a group look at what's available to you; gyms, yoga & Pilates, dance classes, park fitness sessions, aqua aerobics, cycle groups. There's bound to be something out there to get you moving. Another great way to motivate yourself to get healthy is set a goal, take on a new challenge. And, while you're at it wouldn't it be amazing to be doing something for a great cause?

Can you run a 5k? what about 10, 20 or maybe a marathon? What about something a little different, maybe a charity trek, skydiving or a stair climb challenge? Every journey starts with single step, cheesy but true. So that that first step, set yourself a challenge for 2015 and get moving!

## Stair Climb Challenge – Nutrition for Training

Exercise nutrition should be focused around a couple of basic principles; Eating enough to fuel for and recover from your workouts and maintaining healthy weight while avoiding injury. The food you eat every day should fuel your daily activities, getting up, dropping the kids off, going to work etc. When you exercise you need to make sure you increase your calorie intake to put back in what you burn. The type of exercise and the intensity will determine how much energy you use.

If you're also looking to lose weight while exercising then you should control this from your diet. Every calorie you burn from exercise above your normal daily usage should be replaced, and any calorie deficit should come from your normal daily intake in a small consistent amounts. So if you take off 200-300 kcal from your daily intake spread over all your meals, but on days that you exercise you must put back in what you burn. Your daily deficit will still be there, but importantly you'll recover better, stay healthy and strong.

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## Stair Climb Challenge – Nutrition for Race Day

Thankfully endurance nutrition has come a long way since forcing down a large bowl of pasta the night before. So here's a few tips on what you can be doing in preparation for your challenge to make sure you're fuelled effectively.

Because the race is a quite a short sharp hard burst of energy it's unlikely you'll be completely draining your body's energy supply. Therefore as you naturally taper off your training on the week of the event if you maintain your training calories you'll create enough of an energy buffer to refill your muscle stores. Avoid drastically changing your diet prior to the big day, and don't try anything new on the morning of the event as you don't know how it'll sit in your stomach. Keep well hydrated during the whole week before, but beware not to over hydrate though, drink to quench thirst.

Your breakfast on the morning of the event should be enough to top up your muscle stores and settle any hunger pangs. Keep to simple carbohydrates which will digest quickly and lower the chances of any gastric issues, e.g. toast and jam or nut butter, muesli or granola. Allow plenty of time to digest as you want and empty stomach when you actually start 2-3 hours should allow enough time.

Up to the start of the actual climb drink to thirst only to avoid any last minute or midway pit stops and maybe keep a banana or something easy and small to eat if you do feel hungry or have to wait around for any reason. We all prefer different food so take time in your training to see what fuels you and find out what doesn't. Practising your nutrition is the only way to find out what works for you.

## Stair Climb Challenge – Appropriate Exercises

Stair climbing challenges share similarities with running and hiking challenges in that they require good cardiovascular fitness and leg, hips and core strength to perform well. The main difference however, is that unlike walking or running, when you climb stairs you don't get a full range of motion on your gait and as a result we lose a lot of the natural spring we get from impact that helps us from step to step. As a result you'll find the drive off phase of each step more difficult and the reduced efficiency will mean you fatigue more quickly.

By adapting your training and adding in a few little extra exercise you can better prepare yourself for the demands of a stair climb challenge. Your ability to perform the following exercises will depend on your own fitness level and health. When every trying anything new in your program, always introduce it in small amounts to see how you react and build up the volume slowly. A good place to start your base cardiovascular fitness, if you're not already, is to be running or a running substitute such as elliptical/cross trainer, cycling. You can manipulate your chosen cardio to mimic hard intervals to make your heart and lunge work in the zone they'll be in during the challenge.

3 min @ Moderate effort 5/10 (Run, cross-train, cycle).

3 min @ Harder effort 7-8/10 (Run, cross-train, cycle).

Repeat 3-6 times through with a final 5 minutes cool down at the end.

Some gyms have stepper machines which although might seem like your first point off call, might not actually be as effective because your limbs only move up and down without the circular/forward motion that carries us up stairs.

In addition to your cardiovascular fitness try this little circuit to strengthen your muscles, and if you feel comfortable you can limit the rest between each exercise to make it tougher. (If you experience any joint or other unexpected discomfort, seek the advice of a physio or coach). Complete every exercise for 30 seconds working at your own pace, resting for 10 seconds between each exercise, with a 2 minute treadmill effort at the end. Rest for 45-60 seconds and repeat 2-4 times through depending on your fitness.

1. Walking lunges (only step as far and as low as you can control)
2. Burpees (Keep to a speed you can control, and move in as full a range of motion as possible.)
3. Box jumps/Lateral box jumps (either jumping forward onto a Reebok step or with a step between your legs jumping to the side)
4. Jumping jacks/star jumps (light and bouncy)
5. Skipping (rope; 2 leg, 1 leg, alternating legs)
6. 2 minutes Incline treadmill (15% or greater incline for a power walk or slow run)

## Marathon – 4 Weeks to go

With 4 weeks out, all going well you should be coming up on your longest training run before the big day, or if you allowed extra time for illness or injury you may be there already. If you've done fewer than 3 marathons in the last 5 years or this is your first marathon, then the 20 mile mark is probably the longest recommended run seen in most programs prior to the marathon. This is to ensure you've got the stamina to go the distance, while reducing the risk of overtraining while trying to push that extra 6 miles.

If you're behind schedule, don't panic or try to force drastic increases in long run distance just because you're trying to stick to a plan. You're more likely to injure yourself this way. Manipulating your shorter runs can help you manage your weekly run volume if you do feel you need a few more miles. Whatever your long run distance was the week prior try not to go more than 10% above this.

## Marathon – 3 Weeks to go

With 3 weeks to go and hopefully the long run in the bag we need to start looking to reduce volume leading up to the marathon. Depending on your fitness and experience you can do this in a couple of ways. Beginners, having worked up to your longest run you can now back off the mileage to allow your body to recover. Take your long run down to around 2-3 miles off your longest run and take a mile or so off one of your shorter runs. You still want to keep some volume though, as if you drop too much you may lose a little fitness.

For more experienced, stronger runners or those wanting to push towards a faster time or PB you can drop more slowly, taking only 1-2 miles off your longest run and potentially keeping your shorter runs the same distance. This all depends on how many runs you're doing per week and how you're feeling. Backing off too much could stop you peaking for your race, but listen to your body, if you're tired, rest. Pushing too hard when fatigued could see you over training. Start thinking about equipment for race day too, are you planning to buy new shoes or running kit or are you required to wear a specific race t-shirt? If so, then go out for runs in this kit to make sure it fits and is comfortable.

## Marathon – 2 Weeks to go

There's 2 weeks to go, you're nearly there. There's little you can do now to improve your fitness or endurance. Instead in these final weeks your attention should turn to consistency and pacing. At the same time continue to reduce not only your long run distance, but also your total weekly running volume. Tapering can seem tough to do mentally but this is an important part of preparing for your marathon. The reduction in volume will allow your body to recover and repair. The last few months of training will have been very taxing on your muscles and joints and no matter your level of experience, a correct taper will ensure you perform at your best, whether it be chasing down a PB or just to finish.

While an effective taper is about allowing rest, make sure you don't take your foot off the gas completely. Around 7-10 days before the big day should be your last long run which, depending on your level of fitness or race plan, should be around 13-15 miles. Stick to your race plan, remember this is a marathon, so while doing some tempo or pacing runs will help you towards a race time, this is not the time to be doing hard intervals, sprints or track work. Having spent months building endurance, these kind of workouts will be using different energy systems and may end up actually fatiguing you too much.

## Marathon – 1 Week to go

This is it, race week. The good news is that all the hard work and preparation is behind you, you can't do anything else to make yourself fitter. From here it's about ensuring this last week leaves you in the best possible form come the big day. Perhaps the most influential area you can control is nutrition. The right diet in the last week will leave you fully recovered, fuelled and feeling ready for your marathon. Race week nutrition is about more than just shovelling carbs in the night before. The whole week is an opportunity to trickle feed your energy stores. Don't go overboard though, your taper in training combined with sensible intake of varied carbohydrates sources, good fats and lean protein will ensure you're ready.

To make sure your body is in the best possible state make sure you sleep well all week, get to bed early. Book a sports massage a few days before, this can help maximise your recovery and leave you feeling ready. Use this last week to check and double check your race kit, shoes and race pack. Plan your travel to the venue and if you've got friends and family coming plan where they'll be too so you know where you can expect support. This will be an amazing day, so make sure you take it all in and most of all; enjoy it!