

FUEL YOUR RUN

Energise your race week with our **Sports Nutrition Guide.**





RACE WEEK NUTRITION

Carbohydrate intake and loading:

Take your carbohydrate intake to approximately **50-70% of your daily calories for the last 2-3 days before your race**, while you are in your taper. Make sure to **decrease fat and protein amounts** while increasing your carbohydrates so you are not accidentally calorie loading as well. You just want to change the ratios of the macronutrients you are consuming.

It can also be wise to decrease your fibre intake as well to limit the chances of gastrointestinal distress during your race. This change in your eating ratios will increase your body's glycogen stores, giving you added fuel to use on race day.

Great forms of carbohydrate include white bread and cereals, white rice, pasta, flavoured milk, fruit and fruit juices, sports drinks, smoothies, honey, jam, meal replacement drinks and sports bars, gels and chews/chomps.

See Page 7 for more examples of what 30g of carbs can look like.

For every gram of glycogen, the body will hold 2.5 to 3 grams of water; thus, an athlete can experience a weight gain of up to 2 kilos when well CHO loaded. Your body will use this extra water during the race, too! **CHO loading has been shown to enhance endurance and postpone fatigue** in endurance exercise at a steady state. However, it does not help increase one's speed.

The week before a race is not the time to be dieting or calorie restricting as it will leave you short of fuel and energy for race day.



RACE MORNING NUTRITION

Carbohydrate intake:

The morning of a race can already be a nervous time, so to avoid stomach issues, it is best to **only consume tried and tested foods and fluids**. Never eat or drink anything new on race day, no matter how much someone talks up a product or meal idea.

The goal for your race morning breakfast is to replenish liver glycogen stores and to top up muscle glycogen pre-race. The timing of your pre-race meal will depend on the start time of your event. You should aim to **eat approximately two or so hours pre-race** to top up carbohydrate stores and fluid levels.

Don't sacrifice sleep for an earlier, larger meal, as your carbohydrate intake during the race will compensate for a smaller meal eaten pre-race. **A light meal of mainly carbohydrates is best at this time.**

- Aim for 1-2 grams of carbohydrates per kilogram of body weight. Thus, if you weigh 70 kilos, have a light meal of approximately 70 to 140 grams of CHO.
 - Eat at the smaller end of this scale if you only have a short window before the race; use the larger end of the scale if you have a few hours.
- The meal/snack should be high in carbohydrate with low fibre, fat and protein to decrease the chance of gastrointestinal upset.
 - Meal replacement fruit, drinks, sports bars and sports drinks/gels can be useful when nerves or time are a factor.
 - Great food choices can be white bread, crumpets, honey, jam, bananas, dates and smoothies.

What you typically eat pre-long training runs is often a good choice pre-race as well. Practising your race morning breakfast and fluid intake is great insurance for race day!



RACE MORNING NUTRITION

Fluid intake:

Maintaining good hydration strategies for adequate fluid levels in the day or two pre-race, and on race morning, is essential. However, do not go overboard in consuming fluids. **Too much fluid can be as dangerous as not enough.**

In the few days before the race, consume your average fluid amounts, plus make sure to replace losses from training. You do not need to 'water load' as your intake during the race will cover you if you have measured your fluid needs and practised this in training.

On race morning, you need around **400-500 ml water with your pre-race meal**, and you can have a further 250-350 ml 15 to 20 minutes before the race starts.

- It is okay to consume sports drinks, juice and other carbohydrate-containing fluids with the pre-race meal, but do not sip on these in the hour before the race as they could result in a hypoglycaemic/low blood sugar state before the race begins.
- Many athletes consume a carbohydrate gel with 250-300ml water or 300-400ml of sports drink 15 minutes before the race starts so that they have a 'top up' of carbohydrates in their blood when the race gets underway.
 - Consuming carbohydrates so close to the race start will not cause issues with blood sugar levels as you will be underway in the race before this makes it through your digestive system.



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Carbohydrate and fluid intake:

Race day nutrition should be calculated and practised well in advance of race day to determine amounts of carbohydrates (CHO), types of CHO and fluids that an athlete needs and can tolerate per hour.

- The recommended amount of CHO to consume per hour in a marathon is between 30-60 grams for most people. This amount is known to reduce fatigue and to be rapidly absorbed.
- Fluid should be consumed at a rate as close as possible to one's sweat rate but never over it. The average runner will have a safe race if they keep their dehydration losses levels between 1-3%.

It is as dangerous to over consume fluids and a runner should never gain weight during a race. Slower runners are most at risk of over-consuming fluids. All runners should have calculated their sweat rate and be comfortable knowing how much they plan to consume, adjusting if the race day is unusually cold or hot in ambient temperature.

- Start consuming your fluids early and regularly to limit dehydration and to assist gastric emptying rates.
- Over-consuming fluids (weight gain during an event) can lead to hyponatraemia (low blood sodium), which is dangerous to your performance and health.
- Be aware, if consuming food or gels to consume them with water only. Consuming food/gels with sports drinks will slow/inhibit gastric emptying rates and decrease the delivery of both fluid and fuel to your working muscles.



RACE NUTRITION

Example race day plan:

The intake of carbohydrates per hour should be between 30-60 grams on average. If you choose to consume 50 grams an hour, you will need to consume two gels per hour (GU = 25 grams of carb) plus adequate water.

- Alternatively, if you want to consume [Powerade Mountain Blast](#) you will need to consume approximately 500ml to obtain 28 grams of carbohydrates.
 - [Powerade Mountain Blast](#) will be mixed on race day to contain 5.6 grams of carbohydrates per 100 ml of fluid.
- Alternatively, you could choose to have 50ml of sports drink and 1 [GU](#) gel per hour to hit your close to your 50-gram target (48 grams specifically if 500ml Powerade and one [GU](#) gel).

Most individuals ingest carbohydrates every 20-30 minutes during a race, so make your calculations accordingly.

If choosing to consume sports drinks and gels, please remember not to have them simultaneously. You must alternate their intake not to inhibit your gastric emptying rate. Always consume gels/food with water!

Ultimately, your race nutrition plan must suit you and your digestive system. Some athletes will feel great on only 30 grams per hour, while others will prefer 60 grams of carbohydrate or more. The slower you are going, the less fuel you will burn and the less you will sweat. Make sure to adjust your intake accordingly.

If in doubt about your nutrition plan, please see a qualified sports nutritionist.



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What 30g of carbohydrates look like:

2 SLICES BREAD

1.5 PIECES CRUMPET

1/2 CUP CEREAL (read label)

3 WEETBIX

4 RICE CAKES

25G GU SPORTS GEL

300ML JUICED FRUIT

600ML MILK

300G GREEK YOGHURT

2-3 PANCAKES

2 SCOOPS SUSTAGEN SPORT

500ML POWERADE MOUNTAIN BLAST

2 TBPS JAM/HONEY/MAPLE SYRUP

1 MEDIUM/LARGE BANANA

3 MEDJOOOL DATES

1/2 CUP COOKED RICE

1/2 CUP MUESLI (read label)

1-2 CUPS BERRIES

FINISH



Kira Sutherland is a Nutritionist and Naturopath who specialises in Sports Nutrition. With over 30 years of clinical experience, Kira is passionate about working with athletes of all levels. She is the previous recipient of the BioCeuticals Integrative Medicine Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice (Nutrition/Dietetics). She divides her time between lecturing at the undergraduate level, clinical practice and mentoring practitioners of complementary medicine in the application of sports nutrition.

Sincerely,

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