

Nutrition for Cyclists

Tips to stay energized during competition

Nutrition for Peak Performance and Recovery

Carbohydrates are important for energy during exercise and replenishing energy (glycogen) stores after exercise. Muscle glycogen stores are essential to minimize mid-activity fatigue. Protein is important for muscle repair and growth.

- It is recommended to consume a high-carbohydrate meal (150-300 grams) with 14-28g (2-4oz) of protein 3-4 hours prior to competitive exercise.
- During competition, aim for 30-60 grams of carbohydrates per hour of exercise.
- Shortly after exercise, try to eat/drink 50-75 grams of carbohydrate. Continue replenishment by eating/drinking up to 500 grams of carbohydrate and at least 28g (4oz) of protein after exercise.

Carbohydrate Choices on Competition Day

Carbohydrates should be the base for all meals and snacks. While a grainy, high-fiber bread, cereal, or snack bar may seem like a smart high-carb snack prior to exercise, keep the fiber-fortified foods for home (ex: All Bran, Fiber One). High fiber meals can slow the absorption of glucose and may cause gastrointestinal distress.

Before exercise and competition, choose foods with no-added-fiber such as wheat or white bread toast with jelly, pasta, rice, potato, banana, oatmeal with dried fruit, orange juice, fruited yogurt, etc.

During exercise, it is important to choose high-carbohydrate choices that work best for your gastrointestinal system. Suggestions include salted crackers or pretzels, salted peanut butter and honey sandwich, dates with a little salted nut butter inside, fruit, baked fingerling potatoes rolled in salt and refrigerated, homemade energy bites or bars using ingredients that are friendly to you. Note: If you drink plain water on race day, incorporating sodium into your snacks is essential.

If pre-race jitters curb your appetite, make sure to enjoy high carbohydrate meals the day prior.

Hydration

- Endurance exercise in warm weather can pose as a threat for dehydration. Hydrate prior to and during activity.
- Weigh yourself before and after exercise. A lower weight after exercise will indicate if you need to increase your fluids.
- Avoid over hydration. Over hydration and/or sodium loss through sweat increases risk for hyponatremia (low blood sodium levels). Symptoms of hyponatremia include swollen hands/feet, fatigue, confusion, and decline in coordination.
- During vigorous activity, sports drinks can provide fluid, electrolytes, and carbohydrates. In warm weather activity, a sports drink may not be enough to replete sodium lost through sweat and should be supplemented with salty foods.
- Avoid alcohol for at least 3 days prior to competition.



Sources: Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook; Dr. Kris Clark Sports Nutrition Education Handouts