

10 of your sports nutrition questions answered.

Q. I have just started training for an event what should I be eating?

The most important thing you can do to help yourself train well is to eat a healthy balanced diet. Plan for 3 healthy meals plus two healthy snacks per day. Base all your meals on starchy food i.e. potatoes, pasta, rice, bread. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and include some protein (fish, meat, eggs, beans, nuts etc.) with at least two of your meals. Aim for 3 portions of dairy food per day. What's a portion of dairy food? A regular sized yoghurt, a matchbox size piece of hard cheese, 200ml milk. Limit high fat and high sugar treat food (crisps, biscuits, cake, sweets, chocolate) to a minimum. Try to plan your training to fit around your regular meals, this will help you avoid overeating. For example train before breakfast, or put the dinner on, train, then come back and eat dinner.

Q. My event will last just over an hour, what should I eat during the event?

Our bodies have enough stored energy to last for 90 minutes of activity. If your event is going to take you less than 90 minutes it is unlikely that you will need to take on any fuel during the event. If an event will last more than 90 minutes you will need to take on some nutrition to get you through the event. Aim to consume around 30-60g carbohydrate per hour depending on how hard you're working. Start refuelling after 30-45 minutes, if you leave it too late you will be playing catch up and run the risk of running out of energy. The best way to do this is by carrying a carbohydrate containing drink such as a sports drink (check the label) or use energy gels. Over consuming won't make you go faster but may give you stomach ache.

Q. Isn't a sports drink just expensive squash?

Sports drinks come in many forms, and are useful in different situations. Most sports drinks contain electrolytes that will help replace lost body salts. Some contain carbohydrate and some don't. If you are training for anything up to 60 minutes, plain water or a low cal (zero) sports drink will be fine, over 60 minutes think about using a sports drink with some carbohydrates. Looking for a 'real food' alternative? Dilute pure juice 50/50 with water.

Q. What are these recovery drinks all about?

Training adapts muscle to exercise and increases glycogen (stored form of energy found within muscles) stores, which reduces fatigue and increases endurance. After a hard training session our bodies are able to take up and use more readily protein

to help repair and build muscle and carbohydrate to replenish and increase glycogen stores. For shorter runs we can use our regular meals to do this but following a long training session you may need to add a recovery drink especially if you doing more than one training session per day or are not feeling like eating straight away. Looking for a 'real food' alternative? Blitz 250-300ml semi skimmed milk, large spoonful of natural yoghurt, 1 banana or handful of berries, handful of raw oats.

Q. Should I be carb loading before my event?

Again this depends on the length of your event. If you're undertaking a long event such as a marathon you may benefit from carb loading. Try to do this 2 or 3 days before your event once you have done your last training session. Contact me for a detailed eating plan.

Q. How much protein do I need to eat?

*Undertaking training means your body does need a little more protein. **However** most of us eat more protein than we need anyway, we have no capacity to store protein so excess protein is often used to provide energy. Including protein in at least two of your meals per day will ensure you are having enough. Remember to include 2-3 portions of dairy food per day, low fat yoghurts and milk are great sources of protein. Poached or boiled eggs make a great low fat breakfast choice.*

Q. What about the day before?

Think about not having too much fat or protein today. Think pasta with a simple tomato sauce with some chicken. Sip water all day so you stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol (it dehydrates you....) Get a good night's sleep

Q. There's going to be lots of drink/feeding stations on the course. Shall I use these?

Use your training sessions to replicate what you will do on race day. The day before and on the day do what you normally do before a training session. Don't try anything new on race day. Take drinks and gels that you have trained with and stick to these. Stick to your tried and tested nutrition/hydration plan.

Q What about hydration? How much do I need to drink?

It's important to start events and long training sessions fully hydrated. To do this try to get into the habit of drinking 400-600ml of water 2 hours before your long training session and another smaller drink (worth trying a sports drink that contains carbohydrate or fruit juice diluted with 50% water at this point) 40 minutes before going out the door. Whilst exercising it is almost impossible to replace all your lost



fluid and salts so concentrate on drinking enough to stop yourself feeling thirsty. Use a drink you like.

Q. What shall I drink afterwards? I'm planning a big celebration after the event.

***After** training for the event this is the time to really think about rehydrating and replacing body salts. Our bodies rehydrate with both food and drink, choose a drink you like, try not to drink a large amount in one go. Avoid drinking large amounts of plain water, this will dilute your body salts and can cause problems. Drink little and often, use your sports drink as this will have electrolytes in it. Eating real food will help you automatically replace body salts. Your body will naturally rehydrate over the course of several hours/days. Have a look to see what colour your wee is... Should be a light straw colour. The darker it is the more dehydrated you are. So before you crack open the champagne try to eat and drink something to replenish lost body salts and fluids.*

*Want more information or tailored advice for your event? Contact me
Alison Preston
alison@thegoodnutritionguide.co.uk
07936457677*