

# Nutrition for Runners

## *Nutrition is an important part of training*

A healthy balanced diet can help you feel and perform your best. Both fueling and refueling with high quality foods and beverages is important for personal progress, health, and overall wellbeing. A diet filled with “junk” food will not allow you to perform your best no matter how much training you do.

### **General guidelines:**

- ❖ Do not restrict overall calories but do limit empty ones
- ❖ Do not skip meals
- ❖ Overall nutrient composition for distance runners should be approximately: 55-65 percent of calories from carbohydrate, 15-20 percent from protein, and 20-30 percent from fat.
- ❖ Think of the balance of nutrients in your day overall and include a variety of foods from different food groups

### **Carbohydrates**

- ❖ Not all carbs are alike
- ❖ Complex carbs should be the primary source of energy
- ❖ Good sources of complex carbs include whole grains, vegetables, and beans
- ❖ Simple carbs found in soda, candy, pastries, etc. should be limited
- ❖ Simple carbs in fruits such as apples, bananas, and oranges are a great source of fiber, water, vitamins and minerals and should be consumed often

### **Proteins**

- ❖ Protein is important for muscle growth and repair
- ❖ Include some protein with each meal

### **Fats**

- ❖ Not all fat is bad
- ❖ Fat is essential for healthy joints, energy storage, keeping your immune system working properly, and brain development among other things

# Suggested Food List For Athletes

## Carbohydrates

- Whole wheat sandwich bread
- Pasta
- Whole grain cold cereal
- Oatmeal (old fashioned or quick oats)
- Brown rice
- Quinoa
- Tortillas
- Whole grain crackers
- Cereal bars (for pre-workout snack)
- Vegetables such as lettuce (green leaf, red leaf, romaine), spinach, green, red, orange, and yellow peppers, tomatoes, broccoli, avocados, peas, green beans)
- Starchy vegetables (potatoes)
- Fresh fruit (oranges, bananas, apples, berries, peaches, apricots, grapes, melon, pineapple, and kiwi)
- Dried fruit
- Trail Mix
- Beans (black, pinto, and garbanzo)
- Nuts (almonds, peanuts, and walnuts)
- Yogurt
- Milk
- Sports drinks (limit to during and after long runs)

## Proteins

- Chicken breast
- Fish (such as salmon, tuna, halibut)
- Lean ground beef
- Lean ground turkey
- Eggs, egg whites, egg substitute
- Lunch meat (choose nitrite-free varieties)
- Beans and peas
- Pumpkin seeds
- Yogurt
- Cheese
- Milk (non-fat, low-fat, soy)
- Peanut and almond butter
- Trail mix with nuts and seeds

## Fats

Note: Good fats are found in many of the foods listed above. Limit fats found in fried foods.

# Meal and Snack Ideas

## Breakfast

Toast or bagel with peanut butter, banana, and milk  
Oatmeal with apples and walnuts  
Yogurt with granola and berries  
Scrambled egg with toast or bagel, blueberries, milk  
Pancakes or waffles with a little syrup, peaches, and yogurt  
Omelet with veggies and cheese and orange slices  
Hardboiled egg with toast, strawberries, and milk

## Lunch

Sub sandwich with veggies  
Peanut butter and jelly sandwich and orange slices  
Salad with grilled chicken  
Bean and cheese burrito  
Turkey wrap with veggies  
Pasta salad

## Dinner

Pasta with meat sauce, bread, side of green beans  
Pizza with vegetable topping or small salad on the side  
Chili with cornbread and a side salad  
Burger with corn on the cobb and fruit salad  
Salmon with brown rice and steamed broccoli or spinach

## Snacks

Fresh fruit  
Trail mix  
Apple slices with peanut butter  
Cheese stick and crackers  
Veggie sticks with ranch dip  
Hummus and pita  
Popcorn  
Almonds  
Yogurt  
Fig Bars

# What to Eat

## Before, During, and After Running

**Note: Never experiment with nutrition the day of a race. Try out what works best for you before and during training runs.**

### 2-4 hours before running

Eat a carbohydrate rich meal, low in fat and fiber, with lean protein

Meal Ideas:

Cereal with fruit and low-fat or non-fat milk

Pancakes or French topped with low-fat or non-fat yogurt and berries

Breakfast burrito with one whole egg or egg white and low-fat cheese, salsa in a flour tortilla

Turkey sandwich with low-fat cheese

Grilled chicken sandwich

### 30-60 minutes before running

Keep it simple and easy to digest, low in fat and fiber

Snack Ideas:

½ plain bagel with jam

Banana

Low-fat or non-fat Greek yogurt

Energy Bar

Sports drink

**Note: You can skip the pre-run snack if you have consumed a balanced meal within 3 hours**

### During your long run

You do not need to eat during runs that last 60 minutes or less (as long as the pre-workout nutrition guidelines are followed)

For runs lasting more than 60 minutes, consume 30-60g of carbohydrates every hour as tolerated

Fuel Suggestions:

Banana

Orange slices

Pretzels

Energy gels or chews

Fruit snacks

Sports drinks

### Within 30 minutes after running

Consume high quality protein to help with muscle repair and growth and carbohydrate to restore glycogen stores to optimize recovery.

Snack Ideas:

Apple slices with peanut butter

Fruit smoothie made with low-fat yogurt or milk

Trail Mix

Chocolate milk

Protein shake

Energy bar with protein

**Note: whenever possible, choose whole, unprocessed foods instead of pre-packed.**

### Eat a balanced meal within 2 -3 hours after running

# Hydration Guidelines

## Stay hydrated before, during, and after exercise

Adequate hydration should be practiced every day! Do not wait until the day of a race or hard training run to hydrate. Dehydration can lead to poor performance but over hydration is not good either. How much you should drink depends on several factors such as your weight, how much you sweat, the temperature outside, among other things. Here are some general guidelines to help you stay hydrated:

- The majority of your fluids should come from plain water.
- Limit the amount of soda and other sweetened beverages you drink.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables that contain a lot of water such as berries, melon, oranges, tomatoes, and lettuce.
- Drink throughout the day so that you are never really thirsty.
- For most athletes, 0.5-1.0 oz per pound of body weight per day is adequate.
- Drink 8-12 oz water 30-60 minutes before exercise.
- Drink 3-8 oz of water every 15-20 minutes during exercise (<60 min.). Some people do not like to drink or find it inconvenient during shorter runs. If this is the case, pay particular attention to hydration, before and after your run.
- For workouts lasting > 60 minutes, drink a sports beverage containing carbohydrates and electrolytes.
- Test out your hydration plan during a few training runs to be better prepared for a race.
- Replace water lost after a workout with 16oz of fluids for each pound lost. **To determine water loss, weigh yourself before and after your workout.**

Do not over hydrate by consuming an excessive amount of water which can make you sick and be potentially dangerous.

*Note: The **best** way to determine if you are adequately hydrated is by the color of your urine. If you are adequately hydrated, your urine will appear very pale yellow (almost clear). If you are dehydrated, it will be darker in color, like apple juice or tea. If it is completely clear, you may be over hydrated.*