

Athlete Nutrition and Wellness Handout

What follows are some rough guidelines for what to eat and when. On the back, you will find some examples of key parts of your diet.

Immediately Post Run

Right after a run, your body is in shock and needs fuel right away so that you feel 100% again the next time you run.

- Hydrate! You lose water from sweat and need to get it back. Drink 16oz+ of water ASAP
- Eat simple carbohydrates (sugar!). Carbs are your body's energy source and you just used a whole lot of them. Start getting more in your system right away.
- Liquid is digested faster! Drink juices, milk, liquids with lots of sugar but no carbonation.
- Start eating protein. Protein repairs your muscles, which have broken down while running, a protein bar or protein drink can hold your body until the next meal.

30 Minutes-1 Hour After Run

Snacking right after a run is a good start to recover and be fueled for your next run, but within an hour you should also make time for a complete meal.

- Eat meat! Your body needs protein to repair your muscles and meat is an excellent source. Your body can take in 25-30 grams of protein per hour so more than that is unnecessary, but 2 chicken breasts or a large steak will be about perfect. If you are vegetarian, substitute with LOTS of seeds and nuts (chia seeds, almonds, peanuts, etc.)
- Load up on complex carbs. While simple carbs are good right after a run, sugar holds less energy and releases very quickly. Stop eating simple carbs and switch to complex carbs as you move away from your last run. Look for wheat bread, wheat noodles, brown rice, etc.
- Green veggies! Green veggies often contain iron, which is needed to carry oxygen and other fuel from our lungs to our muscles.

Day or Night Before A Race or Big Workout

Nearly everything you eat within 24 hours of a race is going to come with you when you hit the start line. How should you prepare?

- Complex carbs! Most of your simple carbs will burn up as fuel during mile one tomorrow. Eating complex carbs, which take longer to be used as energy, ensures you have something left during mile three. You probably cannot eat too many complex carbs during this meal.
- Take it lighter on meats and cheeses. While protein won't hurt you, it often comes with fat which can make you feel heavy and slow. Try to avoid fried foods or fatty meats such as burgers, pizza, thick cut steaks, etc.
- Avoid simple sugars and caffeine. Now is not the time for a sugar rush or a late night watching YouTube. Get good, sound sleep as best you can the night before a race, and avoid sugars which will keep you up.

2-3 Hours Before Your Race

For the last meal before your race, find a time that feels comfortable for you. I recommend at least one hour before your warmup to let your food settle.

- Hydrate! But don't chug. From now until race time you should regularly take small sips of water, but don't let too much sit in your stomach at once.
- Eat light! A single sandwich, a small bowl of oatmeal, or two slices of toast with some eggs are all good options.
- Get in a habit of eating the same things every week once you find something that works and makes you feel good.

1 Hour-30 Minutes Before Race

Right before a race, eat only when you feel you absolutely need to. Keep sipping water right up until strides.

- Hydrate! Small sips only, as much as you need to prevent dry mouth
- Very very small snacking. Simple carbs only (ex: a handful of fruit snacks, a single jolly rancher, half a banana)
- Caffeine. Only in very small doses of liquid. Lightly sip a little coffee or eat an espresso bean. Caffeine helps you wake up, keeps your mind alert during the race, and boosts your brain's instructions to your muscles.

Some food options and classifications

Simple Carbohydrates

Your body's main source of energy is carbohydrates (carbs). Simple carbs are digested faster so your body uses them very quickly.

Ex sources: Juices, fruits (bananas, apples, etc), white bread, white rice, corn, corn syrup, cereal (especially sugary cereal), cookies, candy, Gatorade, fruit snacks, jelly, Olive Garden breadsticks, pretzels, chocolate milk, granola, etc.

Complex Carbohydrates

Your body's main source of energy is carbohydrates. Complex carbs are more dense and reach your muscles slower. They are also used by your muscles more slowly, thus lasting longer. If looking at a nutrition label, you can tell if something is a complex carb if it has high fiber compared to the "Added sugars" on the label than other similar items.

Ex sources: Whole grain/wheat things (bread, noodles, etc.), brown rice, oatmeal, honey, chia seeds, etc.

Protein

Protein mends tears in muscle fibers and creates new fibers. Every time you run, you create thousands of micro muscle tears which your body builds back stronger with protein.

Ex sources: Red meat (steaks, burgers, ribs), other meat (chicken, turkey), fish, seafood, yogurt, milk, chocolate milk, nuts (almonds, peanuts, peanut butter), chia seeds, sunflower seeds, etc.

Iron

Only needed in small amounts, your body uses iron to create hemoglobin in blood cells, which carry the oxygen needed to produce power from your lungs to your legs. Most of you do not have to worry about getting enough iron, unless you are a vegetarian.

Ex sources: Red meat, green vegetables (broccoli, spinach, asparagus), iron supplements

Things to avoid during the season

As young men running 30+ miles a week, most of you will not be able to eat enough to keep your body satisfied. In general **it is better to eat than not to eat when something is put in front of you**. Below are some things you should have only occasionally and should not make a habit of eating during running seasons:

- Carbonated beverages (like soda). Soda is bad for running, ask Otterbacher for a full explanation.
- High fat foods (Pizza, fried chicken, Twinkies, etc.). Fat is heavy and burns the slowest of energy sources.
- Caffeine except before a race. Caffeine prevents sleep. Sleep is one of the most important parts of training. If you think you need caffeine you probably need more sleep instead.