

Runner's tips to get you through... Nutrition!

WORKOUT: X=TRAIN 45 minutes with varying intensities then STRETCH

This training program was designed to not only train your body, but to feed your soul through devotionals that refocus your racing and training back to our Christian mission, fellowship, and worship. These things feed our soul with what the Bible refers to as “the Bread of Life.” By now you have probably found that with all the running that you are doing that you are needing to put thought and energy into feeding not simply your soul, but your body with the right foods, and at the right times, to optimize your runs. These next two weeks we will look at running nutrition for training and racing in hopes that you will gain an understanding of the needs of your body and how to meet those needs so that you will be ready and energized on race morning!

How much? You are going to be a little hungrier these weeks as you amp up your running regiment, so expect to eat a bit more than usual. With that in mind, a common question is, “how much do I need to eat?” Well there are a lot of factors that play into the answering of that question such as your weight, age, and genetics, but hopefully we can help to stir you towards your unique answer. After years of training runners, I have watched many an athlete actually gain weight during a 12 week training program. “How is that possible” they will ask, while scarfing down a 300 calorie powerbar and 20 ounce bottle of Gatorade after a three mile jog. We are swarmed in the running community by various nutritional or performance enhancing products ranging from bars to drinks to gels; and all these products (though they do serve a purpose) pack a pretty powerful caloric punch! Part of running is learning the unique caloric needs of your body and remembering that your training is independent of your losing weight. This 12 week program is not a diet and whether you lose or gain weight is up to you, but our primary goal is in helping you figure out what your body needs in order to perform to its best ability. With that said, the most accepted equation for calorie consumption is this; you are burning roughly 100 calories per mile that you run, and your metabolic rate increases anywhere from 10-30% for two hours after you finish as your body is recovering from its run. What that means is that for every mile that you run, you need to consume 100 calories in order to maintain your current weight and for several hours after a run, the furnace that we know to be your body will burn calories up 30% quicker than normal! That's why it is so important to eat after runs, so to keep that furnace burning hot and recovery at an optimum level.

When to eat? There are rumors and theories that support any number of eating schedules and routines, but the bottom line is this... Eat when you are hungry. It is a really good idea to eat something first thing in the morning to “break” your “fast,” and again to eat something before bed so that the body is not fasting too long. The longer that your body goes without food, the more it learns to conserve and store the calories that it has. For example, if you skip breakfast and don't eat until noon, and you had your last meal at 7pm the night before than your body has gone some 17 hours without any food. Two things happen then; first your metabolism has slowed to a crawl because it has no readily available food to burn (so that means when you do eat enough calories, your body learns to burn, metabolize, calories at a slower rate that it would normally burn them.) Secondly, you have thrown off your natural hunger patterns and will have trouble knowing when you are full (so you risk eating too much) or when you are hungry (so you risk not fueling properly for your workout.) The best system with all this in mind, is to eat small meals to keep your

metabolism at a high-firing rate, and plan in advance your nutrition around your day's work out so you are properly fueled for your run, but have given your body adequate digestion time before your workout so stomach pains don't restrict your performance.

What to eat? There are double the theories of when to eat dealing with what to eat. Again we start with the simplest answer first, the simple answer is best... eat whole foods. The less ingredients that you see on the label, the less chance that you are going to ingest something that your stomach doesn't like. Variety is essential, whole food doesn't mean boring food; and the goal is to keep your diet rooted in natural, or primary, foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain and freshly baked breads (without preservatives,) cereals without lots of sugars, and lean meats prepared on the grill or by baking. The more that you can avoid various preservatives, artificial sweeteners, bleached grains, fortified products, and chemicals, with names that you cannot pronounce, the better. Try this- challenge yourself to go a week eating foods with only 5 or less ingredients and you will be amazed at the options that you have. Step it up a little bit and eat only foods with 5 pronounceable ingredients! "Organic" is a great choice for the most part with fruits and vegetables, meats, and eggs, but know that "organic" does not mean "healthy," nor does "natural," "fortified," or "vegetarian," so don't let a label trick you! Most of the energy bars that are on the market have more chemicals and calories than candy-bars so limit them to times when you need a quick snack, instead opting for healthy and whole options such as peanut butter on an apple or hummus on pita bread when you have time.

Another thing to be aware of is the serving size piece of the nutritional label. When we eat in moderation there is no such thing as a "bad" calorie... An ice-cream cone can fuel you, and won't make you fat if it is just a serving of ice cream; however, when we eat an entire container of Baskin Robbin's we might have a problem. Measure out some various foods that you like to eat so that you are able to see what a serving size looks like. Once you have an understanding of portion size, factor serving size into you meal choices. A simple trick to control hunger and weight is based in choosing foods with less calorie density in your diet; for example, an entire watermelon has the same number of calories as 3 ounces of dried and sweetened mangos! With all that in mind, remember to have fun with your food and don't fear creativity and testing new things (on off days) so that you know what your stomach can handle!

Proteins/Carbs/Fats/ and the pyramid: We all grew up with the food pyramid poster hanging in our health class or cafeteria and we are inundated with recommendations of carbohydrate, fat, protein ratios, but what does it mean? Carbs are the primary fuel for metabolic energy because they are the quickest burning and most easily accessible during exercise, so this is where you are going to want most your calories coming from before your workout. Whole Grains, fruits, etc... are your best sources for Carbs. Protein is an essential component in recovery and slower burning for longer workouts and it will help ward off hunger and the dreaded "bonk," so it should compose roughly 25%-30% of a runners diet. Fats are essential! Good fats that is, such as olive or flax oils, avocados, and nuts. Fats help in carbohydrate metabolism and lubricate the essential organs, muscles, and joints of the body and should be eaten in roughly the same (maybe a little less) proportion as protein. However, limit saturated fats and foods high in cholesterol as they not only are hard on the arteries and heart, but can cause difficulty in digestion when eaten during training.

Food sensitivity: Running, like nothing else, will amplify any food sensitivities that you have. Many runners battle digestive issues such as IBS and food allergies reign strong. A simple

solution is to start basic (a really “boring” food palate) and then gradually add in new things in a manner that you are able to see how each particular new food category affects you as an individual. Some of the key digestive culprits include Lactose (milk and cheeses,) high levels of gluten (too much bread/cereal,) artificial sweeteners (diet drinks, sugar free gums and candies, etc,) and caffeine. Most people don’t have an allergy to foods, just sensitivities to certain things, so moderation as with anything, becomes the key! Eat richly (read Isaiah 55) and fuel up well!

