

# Nutrition On The Run

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Finding the perfect sports nutrition plan is no mean feat. But dietitian Tom Shand from Trailblazer Nutrition explains how to eating well on a day-to-day basis can go a long way to helping you train and race at your peak.

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## Everyday Nutrition While Training

Sports nutrition is not just gels and sports drinks. Day-to-day nutrition is essential. Training is a continuous cycle of muscle breakdown, repair and cellular adaptation. Providing the body with the right nutrients at the right time optimises these processes and maximises fitness gains. Following the guidelines below will optimise nutrition so the body can adapt and respond to the challenges of the training programme.

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## Eat Regular Meals

The body needs a constant supply of nutrients, so it is important to eat three main meals every day. Each meal should include a serve of lean protein (size of palm of hand), grainy carbohydrates (your fist) and two to three serves of fruit and vege (handful per serve). Some examples below:

*Breakfast:* Weetbix (grainy carb) with trim milk (protein) and fruit.

*Lunch:* Sandwich with whole grain bread (carbs), lettuce, tomato, carrot, cucumber (veges) and shredded chicken or tuna (protein).

*Dinner:* Stir fry beef (protein), 3 handfuls of stir fried veges, and rice (carbohydrate).

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## Ensure High Quality Meals

The following guidelines ensure high quality meals, promoting good health and nutrient availability:

- Consume at least 5 serves fruit and vegetables per day. More during heavy training.
  - Consume 1-2 serves of low fat dairy each day.
  - Choose grainy, unrefined carbohydrates and aim for at least 6 serves per day.
  - Choose a range of carbs - whole grain breads, cereals, rice, wholemeal pasta and potatoes.
  - Avoid refined carbs - white breads, cereals, baking, lollies and sugary foods. These foods can be useful to replenish carbohydrate stores after exercise, but not as daily nutrition.
  - Choose one to two serves of lean protein each day. Trim fat from meat before cooking, take skin off chicken and drain fat from mince as you cook it.
  - Have fresh, unprocessed food as much as possible. Fruit and vege, unprocessed meats, bread, dairy.
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## Snacks

It can be difficult to meet energy and nutrient requirements when training for a marathon with just 3 meals per day. Healthy snacks between meals can provide additional nutrients and extra energy. Avoid processed foods that are high in sugar and fat and provide unwanted calories. Check labels of packaged foods that you buy (aim for less than 10g of fat and sugar per 100g). Suitable snack options include:

- Fruit
- Vege sticks and dip
- Yoghurt

- Wholegrain crackers topped with tuna/avocado/tomato/relish etc.
- Nuts, seeds, and dried fruit mix
- Wholegrain bread
- Baked beans
- Low sugar muesli bars.

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### Marathon Fuel

Formula 1 cars require the perfect mix of fuel to perform at their best, marathon runners are no different - topping up on fuel as they go.

Our energy dense fat stores don't burn fast enough during exercise, which is why our bodies to rely on burning carbohydrates. However, the body's carbohydrate stores are small and easily run out, so you need to top up during exercise.

The following explanations outline how to get the perfect balance of fuel meet your goals.

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### Taking On Carbs During Training

For steady state exercise lasting more than 60min, your performance will be improved if you consume carbohydrates.

For exercise under 60min, consuming carbohydrate won't affect performance. However, consuming carbs in some sessions will help tolerance to fuelling during races.

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### Carbohydrate Quantity

This is not a one-size-fits-all situation. For optimal performance you need to have a personalised plan. Your plan is based upon your physical characteristics, tolerance, goals, and event, but should also take into account personalised elements including:

- How many carbs needed per hour.

- At what points during exercise carbs are consumed.

- In what form carbs are taken.

- Best use of course aid stations.

- What carbs you should carry.

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### Best Time To Have Carbs

Carbohydrates are fatigue prevention, not a cure. Have your first dose after 30-60 minutes. The exact timing of your first and subsequent doses depends on your nutrition and race plan.

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### Carbohydrate Options

The best way to get carbohydrates while training is through sports drinks (link) and gels. There are a variety of products available, so it pays to trial different brands and flavours to find one that suits. Some people like to mix up the flavours as one taste can get boring. Take into account the carbohydrate per cent of the product so you can figure out how much you need and when to take them.

Too much of one type of carbohydrate, for example glucose/fructose, can cause stomach upsets so it pays to consult a dietitian to find the best ratio.