

MANY ATHLETES STILL IGNORE THE BASICS OF GOOD WINTER NUTRITION. ANITA BEAN EXPLAINS HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

PREPARE FOR THE COLD WAR

ARE YOU fuelling your body with the right foods before, during and after training? By building some healthy eating habits now you will ensure you're fit and ready for the cold, dark months of training ahead.

Winter endurance training demands a lot of energy from your body and it's all too easy to underestimate your needs. I still see a lot of athletes fuel up on sugary snacks and drinks instead of a well-balanced meal. When this happens, your body doesn't get the proper energy, nutrients and fibre that it needs to perform at its best. Instead of getting stronger and faster, you'll find it harder to recover after workouts and become more susceptible to illnesses and injury.

Focus on nourishing your body with nutrient-packed foods that will support your training plan. Replace highly processed foods with wholesome, unprocessed foods, such as fruit, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, dairy products, lean meat and fish. As you step up your training volume, you'll need to eat more calories and carbohydrates to support your training.

Carbohydrates remain the body's preferred fuel, especially during hard training, and can be easily accessed for energy soon after consumption. Carbs also allow the body to burn fat for energy so some carbs are needed even for easy runs.

I always advise fuelling for your workout, eating more before long, hard sessions; less on easy or recovery days. For moderate or high-intensity sessions longer than an hour, aim for roughly 5-7g/kg a day.

For a 65kg athlete, that's 325-462g. For long training sessions, your pre- and post-workout nutrition become more important. Here's what to eat and drink before, during and after your session:



Gel products are ideal for consumption during training

Before

Have a meal that contains a combination of carbohydrate and protein, as well as a small amount of fat between two and four hours before you exercise. Suitable meals include a bowl of porridge with fruit and nuts; a jacket potato with cheese and salad, or a chicken or tofu stir-fry with rice.

If there will be a gap longer than 3-4 hours between your last meal and your workout, have a high-carb snack (such as a Clif Bar Energy Bar, a banana or some dried fruit) and a drink 30-60 minutes before your run to ensure you have enough energy to complete your workout.

During

You should drink to thirst. As a guide, aim for 400-800mL per hour (if exercising longer than 30min) but adjust according to how much you sweat.

Also, when you exercise more than 90 minutes, you should consume 30-60g carbs every hour from about 60 minutes onwards (which equals 1-2 carbohydrate energy gels or four products such as Clif Blok Energy Chews).

After

Follow the three golden rules for recovery:

1. Rehydrate with plenty of fluid (replace each 1/2kg weight loss with 450-675mL fluid)
2. Refuel with carbohydrate to replace your body's glycogen stores
3. Repair your damaged muscles with protein (aim for around 20g)

Recovery meals and snacks should contain carbohydrate (for energy), protein (for muscle repair), and plenty of fluids and electrolytes to replace sweat losses.