

Fueling Your Body....by Ken Friesen

Some tips on fueling your body for the long run.

Eating before your run helps to fuel your muscles and prevent hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Hand in hand with this is proper hydration before, during and after your run. Losing just 10% of your body weight in sweat can hamper your performance by as much as 20%.

Your body needs high carbohydrate meals when you have a hard run, as they are your primary source of energy. It is best to have a good meal the night before a race and on race day have a carbohydrate snack 1 to 2 hours before the run. This small snack should be high starch, low fat such as bread, crackers, fruit or a PowerBar along with water or sports drinks.

If you are running 10K or less you should not need any additional food during the run but ensure you intake water as needed. In warm and humid weather more fluids will be needed. During a run your body will not signal the brain that it needs fluids until after you should have started replenishing. If it is a warm day keep drinking sips of water every few minutes if you have a water bottle or take water at every water station.

Only eat food that you are familiar with before or during the race. Race day isn't the time to find out that something new upsets your stomach. If you are planning to use gels in a race try them first during a training run to make sure they are easily digested.

If you are running a half or full marathon extra carbohydrates will help to keep your muscles going. This is when gels come in handy. It is best to take them before your stores of fuel are depleted, as it will take a little while for the energy to kick in. It is recommended to take water with the gels to help their absorption. Taking one approximately every 45 minutes is the norm. Some runners like to mix them in with their water so that they are continually taking a little at a time during the run plus they go down easier this way. If you are taking an electrolyte drink during the run it is absorbed easier if it is not taken at the same time as the gel.

The post run meal is also important. Your body's recovery process and muscle repair is what makes you stronger for your next run. The body needs protein for this process and the best time to get some in your body is within 30 minutes of finishing. It will aid in a faster and more complete recovery. It should just be a small protein snack with some more carbohydrates and fluid. Protein drinks or bars are good as well as a snack like a bagel with peanut butter. An electrolyte drink helps speed the recovery process as well.

If you have any medical conditions that limit the type of food or amount of physical activity you do then consult your physician before taking the specialty energy products mentioned or attempting extended runs.

Eat healthy and perform better!

Written by Ken Friesen

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