****8036 - Pre-Run Nutrition Guidelines**

**1.   Choose carbohydrates with a moderate-to-low glycemic effect to provide fuel**

[Carbohydrates](http://www.thedietchannel.com/Good-Carbs-Vs-Bad-Carbs-How-To-Pick-The-Best-Carbs-For-Your-Diet.htm) are divided into categories according to their ability to contribute glucose to the bloodstream, (aka [glycemic effect](http://www.thedietchannel.com/The-Glycemic-Index.htm)). High-glycemic-index carbohydrates such as honey, Gatorade, white bread, and potatoes enter the bloodstream very quickly providing a sudden burst of energy. This is beneficial during and immediately after exercise, but is not recommended for a pre-run meal. Low-to-moderate glycemic-index foods are desirable because they enter the bloodstream slowly. Examples include bananas, dried apricots, yogurt, milk, kidney beans, apples, and pears. When eaten an hour before a long run, these foods will be digested enough to be burned for fuel, and then will continue to provide sustained energy during your run.

* **Carbohydrate loading**: The goal is to superload muscles with glycogen to delay fatigue and enable you to maintain high intensity exercise for longer. When competing for over 90 minutes normal glycogen stores will not be enough to maintain exercise. Carbohydrate loading is a method of increasing stored glycogen by 200-300%, thereby allowing the athlete to delay fatigue and maintain high intensity exercise for longer. Carbohydrate loading is of no benefit for sports of short duration, and is undesirable in sports with strict weight criteria.

**2.   Limit high fat foods before a run**

High fat foods take longer to leave the stomach. Even if consumed well before a long run, these foods can linger in the stomach and cause sluggishness and nausea. Other things can trigger gut upset. There are ways to limit this.

* Reduce your fibre intake by choosing lower-fibre cereals like cornflakes, rice bubbles, white rice, pasta, bread and soft fruits with no skin.
* Reduce fat in the pre-competition meal. For example, have toast and jam with no butter, use low-fat milk and do not choose to have a fried meal for breakfast.
* Try liquid meals. They empty quickly from the stomach, and maybe useful for athletes who compete early in the morning or who find it difficult to eat solid meals before competition. Make the liquid meal with water or trim milk.
* Ensure that hydration is adequate.
* Make sure you have tested out your pre-competition meal in training.

**3.   Be cautious with sugary foods before exercise**

Some athletes who consume sugary foods before exercise will perform better or experience no effect. For others, drinking [soft drinks](http://www.thedietchannel.com/Marathon-Training-and-Nutrition-Fueling-for-Long-Runs.htm##) or sports drinks or eating candy or sugar cereals 15-120 minutes before endurance exercise may cause a drop in blood sugar that invokes fatigue and light-headedness. If you depend on a “sugar-fix” to improve performance, your best bet is to eat it five to ten minutes before your run.

* White toast and low-fat spreads/spaghetti/corn/banana.
* Cereal with trim milk and/or yoghurt and/or fresh canned fruit.
* Muffins or crumpets with jam/honey.
* Low-fat pancakes with fruit.
* Creamed rice and fruit.
* Oatmeal with trim milk.
* Pasta with a tomato-based sauce.
* Risotto.
* Baked potato with corn/spaghetti/tomato-based sauce.
* Sandwiches/rolls with spreads/banana.
* Fruit salad and yoghurt.
* Liquid meals

**4.   Allow adequate digestion time before you run**

Ideally, you should allow at least three or four hours for a large meal to digest, two to three hours for a smaller meal, one to two hours for a liquid meal, and less than an hour for a small snack. However, you will need to experiment with this timing to determine what works best for you. Adjusting your training schedule to ensure adequate digestion of your pre-run meals and snacks will enhance performance.

**5.   Experiment with liquid meals or snacks to fuel you for running**

If you are having trouble finding pre-run foods that do not cause abdominal discomfort, try consuming liquid meals or snacks. Liquids leave the stomach much faster than solid foods, meaning they are easier to digest. However, some runners find that too much liquid sloshes in the stomach and contributes to nausea, so experimenting early in your training is recommended. There are many commercial liquid meal replacements available, or you can make your own. For example, blend 1/2 cup of vanilla yogurt, one or two peach halves, and two graham cracker squares for a fruit shake.

**6.   Eat well the day before the run**

If you have tried all of the above and still have not found a pre-run meal that agrees with you, plan for some extra nourishment the day before your long run. For morning runners, have an extra large bedtime snack in lieu of breakfast.

Resource: [**www.marathon-training-program.com**](http://www.marathon-training-program.com)[**www.marathon.ipcor.com**](http://www.marathon.ipcor.com)