

Running in the fast lane of healthy nutrition

Many of you are just starting out in the running world and need a little guidance. Nutrition should be included in a good training plan. So, do you run out and buy sports drinks, bars and supplements to make the training easier? Proper nutrition and hydration can make or break a good workout or race. And all the specialty sports jellybeans and supplements on the market won't shave off a few seconds per mile if you are running a 5K. They may add a few pounds if you're not careful.

- **Eat a Balanced Diet Everyday**
 - Eat a balanced diet everyday for a better workout and race.
 - Include carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals.
 - Carbohydrates
 - Carbs are the best source of energy for athletes. Our bodies need carbs to work efficiently.
 - Choose mostly whole grain carbohydrates such as whole grain pasta, potatoes, starchy vegetables, breads, and cereals everyday.
 - Carb loading (such as eating a pasta dinner the night before you train) is not necessary and your body will not benefit from it for a 5K distance.
 - Fat
 - Fat is for energy too, but our body uses carbohydrates best and first.
 - Fats are used for helping absorbing fat-soluble vitamins and getting our needed essential (our body does not make) fatty acids from food.
 - Omega 3 fatty acid is needed and it is found in fish and walnuts.
 - Too much fat packs on the pounds and makes it harder to run.
 - Protein
 - Protein is used for some energy but mainly for repairing tissue during muscle breakdown from training and after the race.
 - Americans consume enough protein in our diet everyday, so you don't need the protein shakes, bars and supplements sold on the market. They will add on pounds if you don't use the extra calories during your run or throughout the day.
 - Good sources of protein are lean meats and fish. If you want to continue the vegetarian lifestyle and train too, good sources are low fat dairy products and beans.
 - Vitamins
 - Exercise causes the body to breakdown and rebuild muscles. The body becomes healthier and stronger but in

the process it produces compounds called free radicals. These free radicals cause cell damage. Vitamins and minerals bind with these free radicals and get rid of them to minimize cell damage.

- I suggest eating ten fruit and vegetable servings a day instead of a multivitamin and mineral supplement. Fruits and vegetables contain antioxidants that help eliminate free radicals.
- If you feel a multivitamin is necessary for back up it won't hurt. They don't add any calories.
- Minerals
 - Calcium to prevent osteoporosis and prevent stress fractures. Found in low fat dairy foods, and fortified products like bread and juices.
 - Iron is to deliver oxygen to the cells. If your iron is low, you will feel weak and tired especially during your running. It is found in lean meats, green leafy vegetables and dried fruit.
 - Sodium is lost through sweat and is usually replaced with a balanced diet. No need for a sports drink unless you are exercising and sweating for more than one hour. If you are craving salty foods, eat some pretzels. Your body is telling you that it needs more sodium.
- **Proper Hydration**
 - Water is all you need for a 5K race. Make sure you are well hydrated before you begin your training sessions.
 - Your urine should be pale.
 - Dehydration leads to fatigue, decreased coordination and muscle cramping.
 - Pay attention to how much you are drinking before and after your training runs, so you will be well hydrated for race day but not too hydrated you have to stop and go to the bathroom during your run.

Everyone is different so practice eating different foods and find out what works best for you. I suggest high carbohydrate and low in fat at least one hour before your run. Peanut butter toast or milk and cereal are easy quick mini meal. Stay clear of rich fatty foods. They may cause GI distress during the run and no time for a potty break. Coffee and other caffeinated beverages can cause GI distress in some people. **Eating is part of your training program too. Practice, practice, practice.**

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