

# Nutrition Guidelines for Marathoners/Half Marathoners

## IN GENERAL

Eat a well-balanced and varied choice of foods most days. This is the best way to ensure that you get all the nutrients you need to stay healthy. Eat something from every food group every day. Americans tend to buy the same 10-15 foods from the grocery store each week.

Eat something within 1-2 hours of waking up. Your metabolism slows down while you sleep to conserve energy. Eating in the morning revs it up again!

Try not to go more than 3-4 hours without eating, except when you are asleep. Waiting too long to eat and getting overly hungry makes it difficult to make healthy choices. Let your hunger be your guide. Eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are full lets you know that you've had just the right amount of food for you.

Choose a good source of potassium every day - bananas and orange juice are examples. Exercise depletes electrolytes from your body, but can usually be replaced by eating a varied diet. Dehydration and muscle cramps can result from inadequate electrolytes, so it's sensible to include potassium-rich foods if you are active.

Choose a good source of iron every day - meat, peanut butter, and beans are examples. Iron is the nutrient responsible for carrying oxygen in your blood and therefore greatly affects your energy level. Overdoing iron does not give you more energy, but your best performance depends on getting enough.

Maintain a healthy body weight - rapid weight loss weakens your muscles and endurance. Remember: You have to eat to be active! Exercise is indeed an important component in maintaining a healthy weight. However, it cannot make up for a poor relationship with food. Eating at times when you are not hungry or eating beyond comfortable fullness are two ways you might be getting in more food than your body needs. On the other hand, restricting intake can also greatly affect your performance and energy level.

Eating according to your body's natural cues is the best way to ensure you are getting just the right amount for your body.

A VERY SIMPLE way to determine how many calories your body needs each day (to maintain your current weight) is to add a zero to your weight – that gives your “coma” level. Now, multiply that number by 1.3-1.6 to get the number of calories needed to support marathon training. (Ex: 145 pounds = 1450 calories for “coma” level x 1.3 – 1.6 = 1885 – 2320 calories per day for training.)

### Pre-workout

Eat a carbohydrate snack 1-2 hours before exercise (or a pre-workout meal between 2 to 4 hours before). Carbohydrate is your body's preferred energy source while you are working out. Easy carbohydrate choices include grains (such as whole-wheat bread or crackers, whole-grain cereal, rice, and pasta), fruits, vegetables, milk, and yogurt..

Drink 16 ounces of fluid about 2-3 hours before exercise and 1 cup (8 fluid ounces) 15 minutes before exercise. Staying well hydrated during exercise is essential for reaching your peak performance. Dehydration can lead to injuries from lack of concentration or coordination. Remember that thirst is a poor indicator of hydration. Check your hydration status before running by looking at your urine color. Light-colored, like lemonade, is the goal (if it's dark like apple juice, drink some more!).

### During the workout

Always practice during training what you are going to do in competition!

Drink between 6-12 oz of fluid for every 15-20 minutes of activity. Weigh yourself before running and again after. Your pre- and post-weight shouldn't differ by more than 2%. (that's only 3 pounds for a 150-pound athlete).

What to drink? Water is an excellent fluid for short-term exercise in mild temperatures. However, during long training sessions or in high temperatures, a sports drink may be a better choice. Exercise lasting this long requires additional carbohydrate & sodium during the activity to keep energy & sodium levels from dropping too low. Juice & soft drinks are not good choices for rehydration. These drinks are too highly concentrated and can actually slow down the hydration process.

Consume 30 to 60 grams of carbs over the course of each hour of exercise. If you weigh closer to 100 pounds, shoot for 30 grams, 45 grams if closer to 150 pounds, and 60 grams if you weigh near the 200-pound range. Know your carb serving sizes. You can get 25 to 30 grams of carbs from a banana, an apple, or a PowerGel. Smaller quantities and more often are generally handled better than consuming all your carbs at once.

### Post-workout

Get rehydrated! For every pound of weight lost during training, drink between 16 and 24 oz of fluid to fully rehydrate. Keep drinking water or sports drink until your urine is clear. This indicates you are back to a hydrated state.

Eat a meal with carbohydrates and protein within 1 hour after exercise to re-supply stored energy in your body. Most importantly, eat enough calories from carbohydrate. Eating 30 to 60 grams of carbs, along with some protein will provide the metabolic spark to jumpstart the natural recovery process. Most well balanced meals that include something from the grains group (carbohydrate) and either a meat, dairy or plant protein provide adequate amounts of these nutrients.

### Checklist

#### Pre-workout

- Eat your pre-workout meal 2-4 hours beforehand
- Drink 16 oz fluid 2-3 hours before exercise
- Top off fuel stores an hour before exercise with a carb-rich snack
- Check that urine color is light

#### During the workout

- Consume about 30-60 grams of carbs for every hour of exercise
- Eat small amounts frequently: every \_\_\_\_\_ minutes
- Drink 6 to 12 oz fluid every 15-20 minutes during exercise
- On long training days or in hot weather drink a sports drink

#### Post-workout

- Consume 30-60 grams of carbs, w/some protein, to jumpstart muscle recovery
- Drink 16 - 24 oz of fluid for every pound of weight lost for optimal rehydration
- Consume another 30 to 60 grams of carbs with protein a few hours later