



## Fuel Your Training

August 26<sup>th</sup> 2015

Kelly LeSage, MS, RDN, LDN

The foods we eat play a huge role in how well our body functions, positively or negatively. If you are training for a sports event or competition, you want to make sure your body is functioning at its peak! This could be a 5K, 10K, Triathlon, Spartan Race, or any kind of event that requires a lot of physical activity.

Your food not only provides the vitamins and minerals your body needs to function, it also provides the fuel. Just like you wouldn't start a road trip with an empty gas tank, you need to make sure you have fuel for your training, and for the actual event.

Here are some basics:

- Check out [THIS](#) blog for great tips on everyday eating for energy!
- When your training exceeds an hour or is very intense your “pre exercise” fueling is even more important. Our bodies can store carbohydrates in our muscles (and liver) as glycogen. This is what your body uses as fuel during most endurance activities. You will be building up your glycogen stores during training.

### Pre Exercise/Event Fueling

If the event or training session is **3-4 hours away**, you can typically have a “normal” meal. This would include nutrient dense carbohydrates, lean protein, and a small amount of healthy fats. If this is the day of the event, you may also want to go for a slightly lower fiber meal and make sure you choose familiar foods to help reduce the risk of any GI surprises.

If it's **2 hours away**, think about having a snack with mostly nutrient dense carbs and a little protein- something like fruit and plain Greek yogurt, ½ a sandwich with lean turkey, or even some fruit, whole grain crackers and light cheese.

**1 hour prior** to the event, you'll want something easy to digest that is mostly carbohydrates. This could be a banana or a sports drink. You will want to avoid high fat or high fiber foods right before an event, as these can cause some GI issues during the event.

### During Exercise/Event

Make sure you start with a full tank (not a full stomach)! Begin your training or event well hydrated with adequate muscle fuel (glycogen from carbohydrates). You will want to try out new products or foods during training to determine the type, amount and timing that works best for you. **Never try something new on race day!**

For workouts or events that are **less than an hour**, plain water will likely be just fine.

If the workout or event is **longer or very intense**, then you will not only need to replace fluids but carbohydrates and electrolytes as well. This could be a sports drink or possibly a sports gel or other similar product (remember to test these out during training). Just remember that you **need electrolytes** (including sodium), **not just carbohydrates**. Some athletes are even able to tolerate foods like bananas, pretzels, or even homemade snacks (rice balls, etc.) during a long event or training session.

## Post Exercise/Event

You have a **30-45 minute window** after an intense workout or event where your body is primed to replenish and even increase your glycogen stores, so that you have more glycogen to pull from next time (meaning more endurance).

You will want something that is **mostly carbohydrates with a little protein**. If the timing works out, this can simply be your next meal. If it's going to be a while before your next meal, then you will want a snack ASAP. This could be a smoothie with Greek yogurt or protein powder, Greek Yogurt and a piece of fruit, even an apple and peanut butter would be a good option. This is especially important if you have 2 events on the same day.

## Hydration

Proper hydration is important every day, and even slight dehydration can affect performance. Make sure you start your training or event adequately hydrated. **Half your body weight in ounces** is a good rule of thumb to start with for everyday hydration needs.

You will need more on training days and during an event. **In general, you can try 8 ounces of fluids every 20-30 minutes during exercise, or around 24oz per hour (just not all at once).**

Dehydration can cause fatigue, cardiovascular stress, increased risk of heat illness and decreased performance. For training or events lasting 60 minutes or less, go for water. If the activity lasts longer than an hour, and is moderate to high intensity then a sports drink can help. **Remember, you will need to replace not only fluids, but electrolytes and sodium at that point.** We all have different sweat rates and some of us are salty sweaters as well. This is important to know while you are training so that you can replenish the right amount of lost fluids and sodium.

Your big goal is to make sure your body is ready for the event, in all aspects. [Proper training](#) and eating nutrient dense, whole foods on a regular basis leading up to the event will help ensure that you are ready. Make sure to test out any foods or sports foods during training to see how your body reacts.

If you would like more specific nutrition information tailored to your needs, please contact a Registered Dietitian/Nutritionist.