

CYCLING NUTRITION 101



Good nutrition impacts every aspect of cycling. It is the foundation for staying healthy and supporting training and performance. Your nutrition will make or break your ride. It is the key to surviving the miles on the road, as well as enjoying the event when race day comes, and training without fatigue. Don't let those hard-earned miles go to waste with poor nutritional strategies. Proper fueling before, during and after your ride is essential to maximizing performance and minimizing injury.

Cycling & Carbohydrates:

Carbohydrates are the body's primary energy source for cycling and are stored in your muscles as glycogen. Your requirement for carbohydrates will depend on how many miles per week you ride and other lifestyle demands. Having adequate carbohydrates before, during and after long and intense rides is important to help maintain your glycogen supply and promote proper recovery. It is important to remember not all carbohydrates are equal. Instead of sugary or refined sourced carbohydrates, choose options like whole grains cereals, oatmeal or crackers. Fruits, beans, potatoes and starchy vegetables are also good options.

NUTRITIONAL TIP

Individualize your nutrition plan: It is important to remember that each cyclist is different. For example age, gender, genetics, digestion, taste preferences and training regimens should all be considered when creating a nutrition plan.

Protein:

Adequate protein in your diet will support your health, immune and hormone function and recovery. Protein is key in building and repairing muscle and body tissue. It is also required to make hemoglobin, which is necessary for oxygen transport to the exercising muscles. Eggs, lean meats, fish, dairy, tofu, lentils, beans and pulses are good protein sources. Including protein in your recovery meal is important to support repair and recovery.

Fat:

In addition to help fuel your workout, fat also provides insulation, protects organs and helps absorb essential fat-soluble vitamins like A, D, E and K. Certain fats, such as polyunsaturated fats (Omega 3 and Omega 6 fats) and monounsaturated fats are good to include and can help decrease inflammation in the body. Avocados, olives, nuts, seeds and fatty fish are good sources.

Vitamins & Minerals:

Consuming sufficient vitamins and minerals is also important for the body to function properly. In order to have an effective training regime, obtaining adequate micronutrients is required. Vitamins and minerals play key roles in various functions in the body including energy production, cell protection, muscle contraction, nerve function and tissue repair. Eating a nutrient dense diet and adding a high quality supplement can help you meet your needs.

Hydration:

Just 2% of dehydration can result in a significant reduction in performance. Drinking enough fluid will not only support better riding, but will result in better energy levels. Road cyclists should aim to drink enough fluids each day to replace fluid losses, adapting their fluid intake to factors such as temperature, wind, sweat rate, training intensity, duration and altitude. Weighing yourself before and after your activity, and replacing any lost fluids is a good way to stay hydrated. Having a drink with meals and snacks and sipping on fluids regularly during training is a good start.

Gut Health:

Gut issues in bikers are somewhat common. Keeping hydrated and staying properly fueled with well-tolerated foods can help avoid or minimize gut problems. In addition, including probiotics and digestive enzymes in your daily nutrient routine can also support gut health.

Tips:

- **Consistency:** For best results, remember good nutrition should be followed on a consistent, day-to-day basis.
- **Keep a food log:** Keeping a record of what you eat can help you figure out what foods help support your cycling program. Try to change one thing at a time so you can identify what helped or hindered your performance or recovery.
- **Consider a supplement:** Food choices are key to fueling your body for cycling. However, some nutrients you need can be hard to get through diet alone. Consider adding a good supplement that is easily digested and can ensure you obtain adequate nutrients.
- **Cycle-Friendly Snacks:** Not only does a good biking snack support your workout, but it also needs to be portable, not melt and easy to digest and eat. Bite-size pieces of bananas, fig bars or grapes are easy fueling examples.
- **Keep with what you know:** Don't try anything new on race day. Always experiment with types and timing of foods and fluids intake during training.

