



Triathlon Wetsuits
Free Shipping. Low Prices. In-Stock
Quintana Roo, Orca, Ironman.

Simple Triathlon Training
Set A New Personal Record Swlm -
Run training log

Ads by G

- Home
- Articles
- Forum
- Community
- Local Info
- Reviews
- Classifieds
- Web E-mail
- Coach Finder
- Team
- Contribute



Eating for Performance

Page 1 of 1

To be a successful athlete (you can determine your personal definition of successful) there must exist a balance of physiological, psychological and nutritional variables. This article will address the latter and how nutrition plays into a well-balanced training plan.

In brief, carbohydrates should be the focal point of your diet for they provide you the bulk of the energy needed to sustain exercise. There are low amounts stored in your muscles and liver so it is important to constantly replenish them (I will discuss this in more detail later). The average adult male has about 1800-2000 calories stored as glycogen in their body at one time. A good rule of thumb is to try to consume 50-65% of your total daily calories from carbohydrates. There is such a wide range because every person is different and prescribing a good eating plan is as individual as training programs. Find what works for you.

Protein is the next important macronutrient for it will aid in replenishing lost stores that happen during exercise and will provide the amino acids that the muscles need to "rebuild". It is important to understand that consuming protein does NOT build muscles. For example, if you were to consume high protein products such as meats, cheeses, protein powders, etc. while remaining sedentary (i.e. couch potato), your body would not increase its fat-free mass. It would, however, increase fat mass and body weight. During intense, long-duration exercise, the body will depend on a little protein as fuel, but it is not a significant source of energy. A good rule of thumb is to consume between 15-20% of your total daily calories from protein sources (lean is a better choice). Remember that grains and vegetables also contain protein, although it is what is called incomplete (but still a good choice).

Fat is more important than people believe. Neglecting fat in your diet can lead to very serious consequences. Fat is needed in the body to absorb fat soluble vitamins, cushion the organs, insulate the body, and make sure nerve impulses are efficiently sent and received, just to name a few functions. Try to keep fat at about 20-30% of your total daily calories for optimal health and performance. It is a good idea to include the "better" fats in your diet such as the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated rather than the saturated and trans fatty acids found in some oils, butters, and convenience foods such as cookies and chips. Good food choices for the "better" fats include olives, avocados, nuts and fish.

So the key to optimal performance is to maintain a good balance of the three macronutrients. Making sure you have adequate stores of carbohydrate (glycogen) and making sure your muscles are replenished with the right amounts of amino acids from proteins on a daily basis will ensure good health and training/racing. I did not mention fat because it is often disguised. By this I mean you will probably consume adequate amounts of fat without making a conscious effort.

Besides maintaining a "healthy" (remember it depends on your individual preferences and what works for you) eating plan there are specific times you can ingest certain macronutrients to ensure good performance.

Before training or competition, it is advisable to consume about 200-400 calories about 2-4 hours before. It is important to consume familiar foods and to focus mostly on carbohydrates since it takes them shorter to digest. Protein and fat take longer to digest, thus they will stay in your system longer and you may feel a heavy, full sensation when you begin exercise. Along with this is the fiber issue. Consuming higher fiber foods will also slow down digestion.

If solid foods simply do not agree with your system pre-exercise, try a

Triathlete.com



liquid meal or sports drink. Remember, the most important thing is to experiment with different foods and combinations during training, never right before a race.

During exercise it is important to maintain blood glucose levels by ingesting 30-60 grams of carbohydrate (120-240 calories) per hour. As I mentioned previously, our bodies do not store many carbohydrates so it is important to constantly replenish them. Energy gels or sports drinks are very easy for the body to digest during exercise (or soft foods such as bananas).

After exercise is crucial for nutrition also. There is a 2-hour "window of replenishment" at which time it is critical to ingest carbohydrates and protein. Even more important is the first 30 minutes following exercise. Focus on eating foods (carbohydrates) that have a high glycemic index, meaning they are more quickly absorbed into the bloodstream. Sports drinks are great for this also since it is sometimes hard to eat solid foods after exercise. Fruits are also a great choice and also supply much needed fluid. So the bottom line is to ingest more carbohydrates than protein (about a 3:1 ratio per gram) and adequate amounts of fluids. This will ensure a faster recovery which will allow you to exercise sooner after your event.

Nutrition for enhancing athletic performance can be tricky but with the basic knowledge provided in this article, you should be able to eat for good health and performance.



By » seebohar



About seebohar

Bob Seebohar, MS, RD, CSCS

Bob is a Sports Dietitian and USA Triathlon Certified Coach who owns and operates ATP Coaching, which provides professional coaching for all endurance athletes as well as full sports nutrition and weight management services. Email Bob at bob@atpcoaching.com or visit

www.atpcoaching.com for more information.

Additional Info

To view this user's profile, click here. This user is also a coach, to view their Coach Finder description page, click here.

Page 1 of 1

© 1998-2004 Triathlete, Inc. All rights reserved. - Terms of Service - Updates