

Healthy Habits for Runners



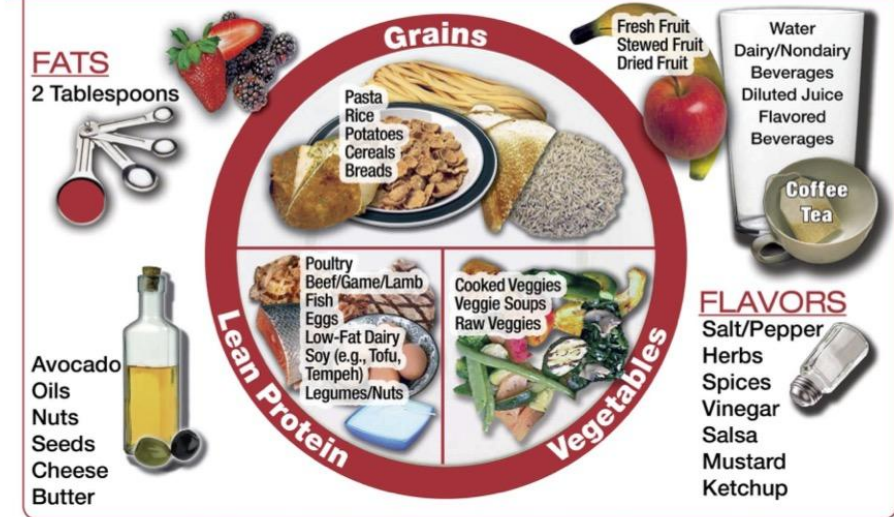
Meals

Best to fill your plate with the following foods

- o Lean protein
- o Fruits and vegetables
- o Whole grains and cereals
- o Low fat dairy
- o Healthy fats (avocado, olive oil, seeds, nuts, eggs)
- o Variety of foods and colors
- o **However all foods fit, do not deprive yourself of foods you love (dessert, fast food, etc). They just should not make up the majority of your daily diet.**

ATHLETE'S PLATE

HARD TRAINING / RACE DAY:



The Athlete's Plates are a collaboration between the United States Olympic Committee Sport Dietitians and the University of Colorado (UCCS) Sport Nutrition Graduate Program.
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Right amount of food

- In general, 3 meals a day
- 2-3 snacks a day (Breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, pre-workout snack, dinner, bedtime snack)
- If you have a hard time with meals, add in more snacks/small meals.
- On hot days/loss of appetite try to drink you calories, smoothies, high calorie protein drinks.
- When building you plate for meals, try and represent all the food groups

How to Build Your Snacks

Focus on having intentional, balanced snacks to help meet nutrient needs between meals. Aim to eat every 2-3 hours.

Carbs

- Pretzels
- Crackers
- Fruit (frozen, fresh, dried)
- Granola/muesli
- Whole grain cereal
- Tortillas/wraps



Protein

- Greek yogurt
- Nut butter
- Nuts/seeds
- Cheese
- Beans
- Beef jerky



Why carbohydrates for runners?

- Carbohydrates should be the backbone to any athletes diet. Prioritizing consumption before and after hard workouts/competitions.
- Primary Energy Source (Glycogen): Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose, the quickest fuel source for muscles, especially during high-intensity running.
- Prevent "Hitting the Wall": Glycogen stores are limited (lasting about 2 hours). Adequate intake prevents the severe depletion (bonking) that causes dramatic fatigue and performance decline.
- Enhanced Performance & Endurance: Consuming carbs improves endurance, allowing runners to maintain faster paces for longer.
- Improved Recovery: Post-run carbohydrates replenish depleted muscle glycogen stores, which is vital for recovery and repairing muscles.
- Brain and Immune Function: Carbs fuel the brain and support immune health, which can be compromised by intense training.
 - Teens generally need 225 to 325 grams of carbohydrates per day to fuel normal body functions, brain activity, and physical growth.
 - Active teens or those training for sports need 3–10 grams of carbs per kilogram of body weight. Sprinters would be on the lower end and distance runners on the higher end.

Why protein for runners?

- While carbohydrates are crucial for fuel, protein ensures that the body can handle the training load and adapt, making it essential for consistent training.
- Muscle Repair & Recovery: Running creates microtears in muscle fibers. Protein provides the necessary amino acids to mend these tears, allowing muscles to heal stronger and reducing recovery time between sessions.
- Enhanced Endurance & Performance: Protein intake helps improve muscle glycogen levels when paired with carbohydrates. 60-90 grams of carbs paired with 20-30 grams of protein within 30–60 minutes post-run is ideal for initiating the muscle repair process.
- Preventing Muscle Breakdown: During intense training, the body can break down muscle for energy. Adequate protein intake preserves lean muscle mass.
- Immune System Support: High-intensity training can strain the immune system; protein ensures the production of immune cells, preventing fatigue and illness.
- Active teens or those training for sports need 1.4-2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight.

Timing of food

Pre-Race/Exercise

- 2-4 hours pre-exercise
 - Continue to drink water, eat a meal with plenty of easy to digest carbohydrates like pasta with sauce, sandwich with pretzels and fruit, sushi rolls, toast/bagel with peanut butter and banana/fruit, oatmeal with fruit, chicken, rice and vegetables.
- 1-2 hours pre-exercise
 - Eat a snack with easy to digest carbohydrates like bananas, crackers or granola bar.
 - Continue to drink water and can also sip on an electrolyte drink.
 - Always choose familiar, low fat and low fiber food to minimize stomach upset.
- Finding it hard to eat pre-race, try the following:
 - Prioritize a large meal for dinner the day before
 - Liquid calories will be super important after that. They are easier to consume. 3 to 4 hours before, try a protein smoothie, if you cannot tolerate a meal. Other ideals are drinkable yogurt (if you can handle dairy before a race), granola bars and fruit, or applesauce.
 - 1-2 hours before sip on fluids with carbohydrates; fruit juice, sport drinks, naked juice. If you are going to be drinking something and unable to eat, make sure you choose fluids that provide calories.
 - Don't forget to drink water in addition to any of these options!

Post Race/Exercise

- 30-60 minutes post exercise
 - Rehydrate with 16-24 oz of water and 1-2 servings of a electrolyte drink during hot weather (Coconut Water, Nuun, Scratch, BodyArmor)
 - Eat protein/carbohydrate combo to kick start recovery: chocolate milk, string cheeses and crackers, turkey sandwich and fruit.
- 2 hours post exercise
 - Have a full meal following the “athletes plate”
 - Continue to drink water.
- 4 hours post exercise
 - Have a snack that is high in carbohydrates plus protein.

Timing of food

Between races

- If you 1+ hours between races continue to snack lightly on easy to digest carbohydrates like bananas, crackers or granola bar
- 2+ hours
 - Continue to drink water, sip on electrolyte drink, can eat a more hardy snack, ½ sandwich of choice, crackers and cheese, rice cake/bagel and nut butter.
- 3+ hours
 - Continue to drink water/electrolyte drink, eat a meal with plenty of easy to digest carbohydrates like sandwich with pretzels and fruit, sushi rolls, toast with peanut butter and banana/fruit, oatmeal with fruit, chicken, rice and vegetables.

Hydration

- Water Bottles – DON'T SHARE! Carry everywhere
- Right amount – At least half your body weight in ounces each day and on hot days even more.
- Right time – All day long. Being hydrated will help keep your body temperature down.
- What to drink – water first, then an electrolyte drink (Coconut Water, Nuun, Scratch, BodyArmor).

Sleep

- 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.
- Our bodies love consistency!
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time each morning to establish your daily rhythm.
- Having a hard time falling asleep?
 - Avoid all electronic devices 30 minutes before bed
 - Sleep rituals e.g.: music, meditation, relaxation techniques, white noise
 - Natural sleeping aids include complex carbohydrates, tryptophan, magnesium—apples, bananas, milk/cheese and nuts all contain high amounts of tryptophan and magnesium.

Sleep and Injuries

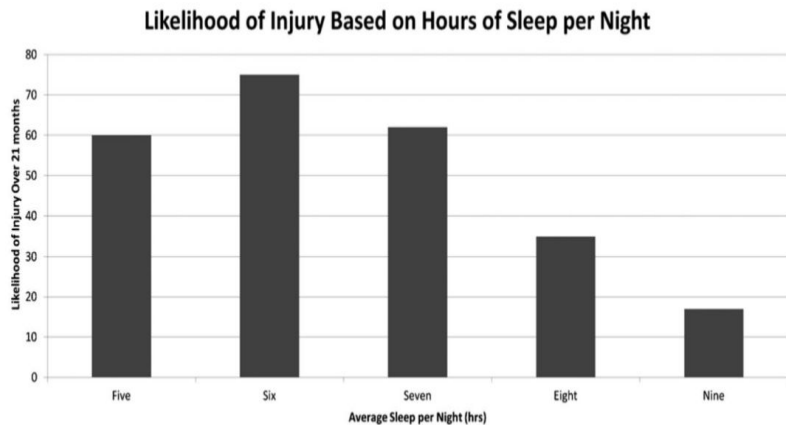


FIGURE 1. Likelihood of injury over 21-month period based on hours of sleep per night. Used with permission from Children's Orthopaedic Center at Children's Hospital, Los Angeles. Adaptations are themselves works protected by copyright. So in order to publish this adaptation, authorization must be obtained both from the owner of the copyright in the original work and from the owner of copyright in the translation or adaptation.

Keys to Success

- Proper planning e.g.; talk to the primary shopper in your house about what to buy, go with them to shop. Make a plan and list.
- It is not realistic to increase your food consumption all at once. Make one or two goals to increase the amount of food you are consuming each day. Stick with it for several weeks, and then you can re-evaluate and create a few more goals.
- There are no good and bad foods, everything can fit into our diet in moderation. Don't worry too much about being perfect, just make small steps to get more calories!
- Getting enough food and sleep is the best way to ensure you recover properly and take full advantage of our training plan.
- Everytime we run we create tiny micro tears in our muscles. If we get proper nutrition and sleep, those muscles will recover and can even rebuild to be stronger and faster. This is called supercompensation if you would like to look it up and read more. If we are not getting enough calories or sleep, athletes can get worn down and this can lead to injury.
- Recommend getting iron (ferritin) tested each year. Target is at least 40-50 ng/ml for athletes.
- Special consideration for female athletes. If you have irregular periods or haven't had a period for over 3 months. Talk with your physician.

Sample Fueling Plan

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Breakfast	1 cup of cheerios with milk 2 eggs scrambled with spinach and cheese Glass of milk 2 clementines	Overnight oats topped with fruit and nuts Glass of milk	2 slices of whole wheat toast with smashed avocado and one egg on each (2 eggs total) Glass of milk Cup of fruit
Snack 1	Apple and peanut butter	Carrots and hummus	Trail mix
Lunch	Tuna salad sandwich on two slices of whole wheat bread, slice of cheese, and spinach Pretzels Snap peas and hummus	Quesadilla with two tortillas, shredded cheese, chicken, and avocado Tortilla chips Apple	Dave's Killer Bread Bagel with cream cheese Sliced bell peppers and hummus Pear
Snack (before practice)	Banana and sports drink	2 energy bites and a clementine	Honey stinger waffle and handful of grapes
Dinner	Veggie and chicken stir fry served over brown rice Glass of milk Cup of fruit	Baked salmon Wild rice Sauteed greens (like kale)	Homemade burger on a bun topped with spinach and avocado Oven baked french fries Side salad
Snack 2	2 energy bites	Banana and peanut butter	Cereal and milk