



Nutrition for Runners

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Sarah is a registered dietitian nutritionist, nutrition communication expert, and owner of the private practice and consulting company Sarah Gold Nutrition. She works with active people to help them fuel their busy lives so they can feel their best.

As a runner, triathlete, and spin instructor, Sarah has a passion for helping both beginner and experienced athletes develop fueling plans to help them enhance performance and enjoy the training process! She believes that whole foods are the foundation of a healthy diet, but that all foods can fit, and life wouldn't be the same without ice cream and red wine. Read more about Sarah at www.sarahgoldrd.com.

FOOD = FUEL FOR YOUR BODY

Fueling well helps keep your body and mind in top shape

- Faster, stronger workouts
- Boosts energy
- Better recovery
- Strong immune system
- Enhances mood
- Contributes to better sleep



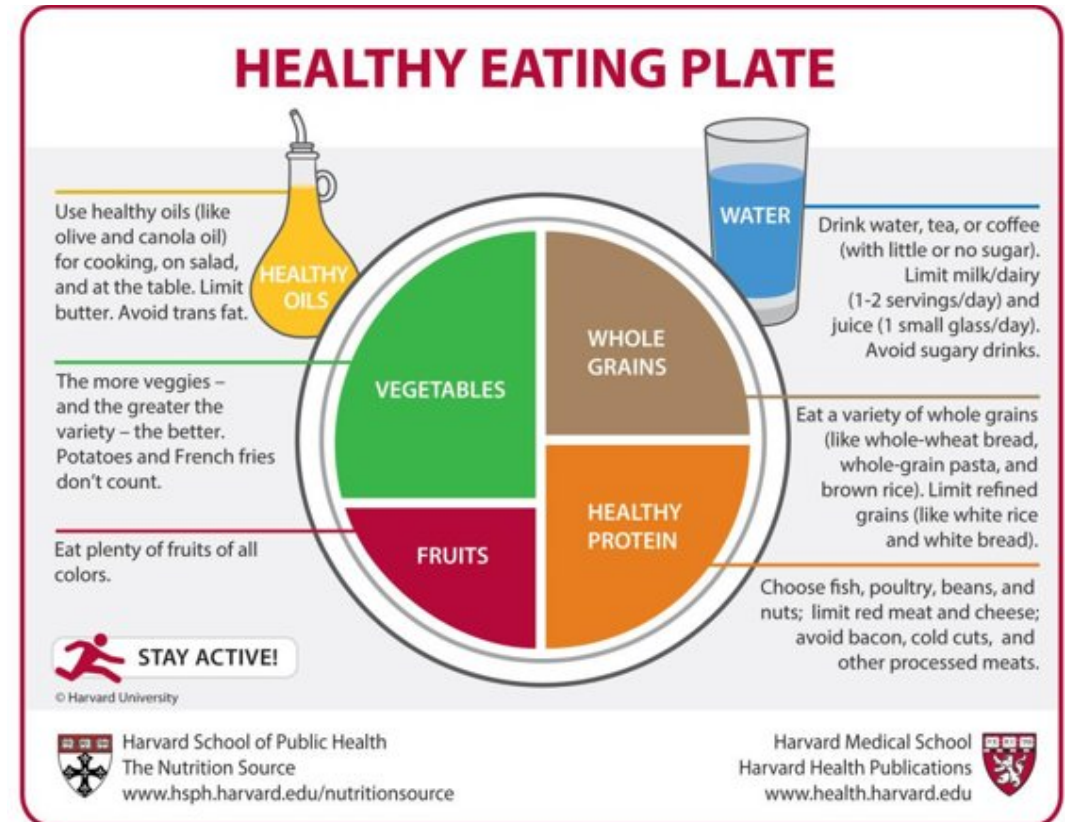


Nutrition for Runners: The Basics

- Eat regularly throughout the day
 - Most people need to eat something every 3–4 hours
- Hydrate throughout the day
 - Water, herbal tea, and seltzer are the most hydrating
 - Coffee contributes to hydration, but don't overdo it
- A healthy diet includes
 - A variety of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, whole grains, and plant-based fats
 - Mostly whole foods
 - Limited highly processed foods
 - Occasional indulgences

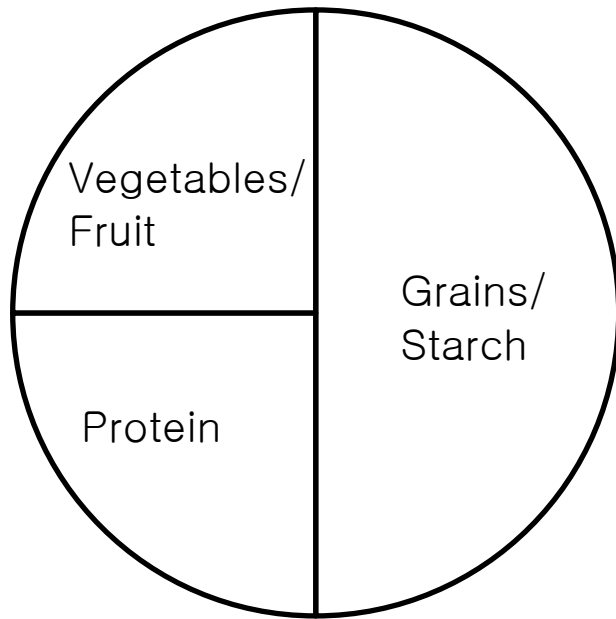
A Guide to Healthy Eating

- Balance your plate for:
 - Optimal nutrient intake
 - Consistent energy
 - Better performance
- Follow this guide on:
 - Rest days
 - Short run days



Eating for the Endurance Athlete

Long Run Days



The day before and on long run days, need to boost carbohydrate intake.

Fruits and vegetables still important, but limit high-fiber foods right before a run

Include plant-based fats such as avocado, olive oil, nuts, and seeds for flavor and additional nutrition



carbohydrates

- Primary fuel for muscles and brain
- Runners need consistent source of carbohydrates before and after run
- On runs longer than 60–90 minutes, need to consume carbohydrates on the run
- Not consuming enough carbohydrates can lead to:
 - Low energy
 - Poor performance and recovery
 - “bonking”



Protein

- Important for many bodily functions including muscle recovery
 - During training = between 0.5–1 gram protein per pound of body weight
- Animal proteins are better absorbed than plant proteins
- Vegetarians/vegans may need more protein foods to meet needs during exercise



Fat

- Fat is essential for
 - Vitamin and mineral absorption
 - Cell structure
 - Immunity
 - Energy
 - Many other body functions
- Choose primarily plant-based fat
- Limit animal fat, though dairy fat may offer some health and exercise benefits



Fuel Up Before Your Run

60–90 minute before your run

- Easily digestible carbohydrates
 - Banana
 - 2–3 dates
 - White toast with jam or small amount of nut butter (as tolerated)
 - Small bowl cereal
 - Oatmeal (as tolerated)
 - Kind Pressed Bar or $\frac{1}{2}$ Larabar
 - Rice with lowfat sauce

Pro Tips

- Choose familiar foods
- Practice during training
- Limit foods with fat, fiber, and a lot of protein
- Close to your run eat small amounts
- Whole foods offer more nutrition than sports supplements

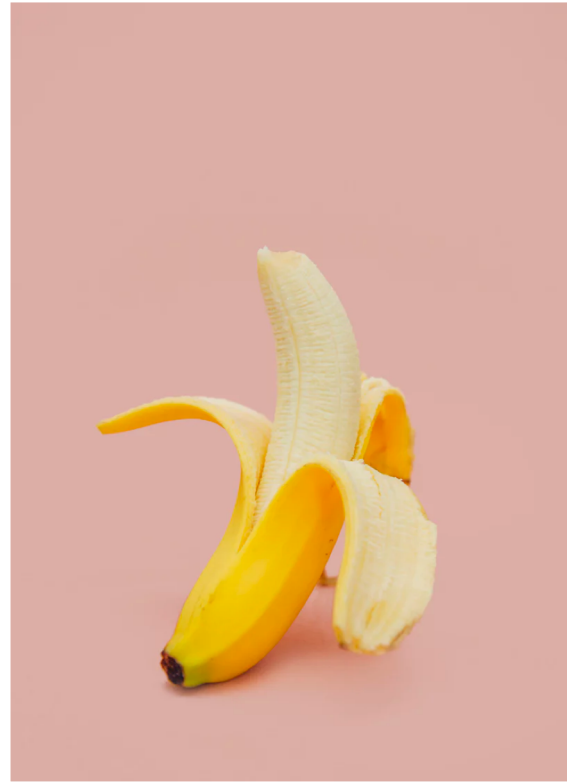
Do I Need to Eat Before a Run?

It Depends!

As yourself:

1. Did you eat a meal within the last 2–3 hours?
2. Will your last meal sustain you for the intensity and duration of your workout?

Early morning exercisers do benefit from eating a small snack before a run, especially a longer, more intense workout. Learn what your body needs and what your digestive system tolerates.



Keep Your Tank Full on the Run

- Runs < 60 minutes = water only
- Runs > 60 minutes = hydration + carbohydrates
 - Need 30–60g carbohydrates per hour
 - Fluid needs depend on size and sweat rate
 - Consider electrolyte drinks for sodium replacement
- Test your run fuel during training regularly – avoid anything new on race day!

Foods with 30 g carbohydrates:

- 1 sports gel
- 1.5–2 mejool dates
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup raisins
- 16 oz sports drink
- 1.5 fruit pouches
- 1.5 oz pretzles

Recover Well

- Choose a mix of carbohydrate and protein for best recovery
- Eat within 60 minutes of long or hard workouts
 - Promotes faster recovery
 - Limits "ranger" later in the day
- After shorter and recovery runs, no need to eat until next meal/snack

Sample Recovery Meals

- Smoothie with fruit + yogurt or silken tofu + chia seeds
- Egg + avocado sandwich on whole grain bread
- Grain bowl with vegetables + lentils or tofu + quinoa
- Salmon + vegetables + rice

Sample Recovery Snacks

- Chocolate milk
- Picky Bar, Kind Protein, Perfect Bar
- Yogurt parfait with fruit and granola
- Toast with nut butter
- Apple with nut butter
- Roasted chickpeas + fruit

Hydrate Before, During and After Your Run

- Before your run:
 - Drink water regularly – minimum of $\frac{1}{2}$ oz per pound of body weight per day outside of exercise needs
 - Look for pale yellow urine
- During your run:
 - Sip small amounts of water or electrolyte drink frequently
 - Gatorade, Nuun tablets, Generation UCan
 - Don't wait until you're thirsty – it could be too late
 - Test hydrate methods throughout training
- After your run:
 - Continue to hydrate to replace water losses
 - 16–20 oz for every pound lost during your run



SIGNS OF POOR HYDRATION:

1. BEING
THIRSTIER
THAN
NORMAL

5. DARK URINE
(SHOULD BE A
PALE STRAW
COLOUR)

2. DRY,
STICKY
MOUTH

4. HEADACHE
DIZZINESS OR
FEELING LIGHT
HEADED

3. FEELING
TIRED
WITH REDUCED
CONCENTRATION



Race Week

- Continue to eat as you have throughout training
- Avoid trying any new foods or cuisines
- Limit high fat foods, spicy foods, and alcohol
 - Recommend no alcohol 3–7 days before a race

Pro Tip: Do I need to carb load?

Increasing your carbohydrate stores in the days leading up to a race can help with performance on race day. However, you don't need mounds of pasta the days or night before a race. Eat a reasonable portion of grains/starch at most meals throughout leading up to your race. As you taper, your body will store more glycogen in your muscles. Overdoing it with carbs can lead to fatigue, bloating, and not feeling well .



Race Day

- Eat the breakfast or meal you've tested out during training
- Don't try anything new
- Pack your snacks/gels/chews in an easily accessible spot
- Have a hydration plan (water vs. sports drinks) – what you practiced during training

Pro Tip:

During training, practice getting up at the same time you would need to for race day and test out your fueling and hydration plan

How to Limit Porta Potty Stops

- Choose familiar foods the day before and day of your training runs + race day
- Limit fiber, fat, and protein in the 2 hours before a run
- Limit spicy foods, fried foods, and anything in heavy sauces the day before a long run/race
- Practice fueling and hydrating during training

Don't Forget To...

- Take rest days: Your body needs time to recover from hard workouts
 - Eat regularly on rest days too – your body continues to replenish carbohydrate stores and repair/rebuild muscle over 24–48 hours post run
- Get enough sleep: During training sleep needs may increase
- Manage stress: Stress increases risk for injury and poor performance

Common Questions

Can I Follow a Plant-Based Diet While Training?

Absolutely! Many endurance athletes follow a vegan or vegetarian diet. Choose mostly whole foods and include a source of plant protein at each eating occasion.

Vegans may need to supplement B12 and iron

TOP VEGETARIAN PROTEIN SOURCES



Greek Yogurt
23 grams of protein
per cup



Lentils
4 grams of protein
per 1/4 cup (cooked)



Beans
(chickpeas, black
beans, etc.) 4 grams
of protein per 1/4 cup



Cottage Cheese
14 grams of protein
per 1/2 cup



Hemp Seeds
4 grams of protein
per 1 tablespoon



Chia Seeds
3 grams of protein
per 1 tablespoon



Edamame
5 grams of protein
per 1/4 cup (shelled)



Green Peas
8 grams of
protein per cup



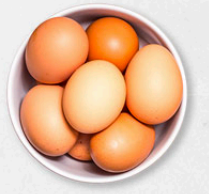
Quinoa
8 grams of protein
per cup (cooked)



Peanut Butter
3.5 grams of protein
per 1 tablespoon



Almonds
3 grams per 1/2
ounce



Eggs
6 grams of protein
per large egg

EatingWell.

I'm Always Hungry – How Do I Satisfy My “Runger”

- Ask yourself:
 - Am I eating within 60 minute of completing a run?
 - Are my meals balanced with protein, whole grains, and fruits + vegetables?
 - Do I need to eat more fat?
 - Am I going more than 3–4 hours between meals?





Can I Drink Coffee Before a Run?



Caffeine may enhance performance but it can also cause digestive distress. If you regularly drink coffee, try it out before a short run first. If you tolerate, then try before a long run.

Coffee can contribute to total fluid needs, but is not as hydrating as water, so limit to 1–2 cups per day.

If caffeine interrupts your sleep, do not drink after 2pm.

Is a Ketogenic Diet Beneficial for Runners?

- Carbohydrates are the primary source of fuel for runs
- Generally not recommended for endurance athletes, especially during training or competition
- Some endurance athletes have seen success with a low carb, high fat (LCHF) diet but it takes the body at least 3 weeks to adapt. During this time, you may not be able to sustain regular exercise and endurance exercise often is affected even after the adaptation period
- Long-term, very high fats diets are not recommended for health reasons



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