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"Nutrition: Fill Your Body With Super Octane Fuel For Best Performance"

by Mindy Solkin

The three key components of running well are genetics, training and nutrition. As a long distance runner, whether you are running three, six or 26 miles, you must treat your body as if it were a high-performance sports car. For it to perform well it should be filled with super-octane fuel. This will keep it running smoothly and efficiently. There are six nutrients that will help you with your fuel injections and carry you through to running success. My favorite nutritional quote is that you can't go wrong if you remember to eat the 4B's: Bagels, Broccoli, Bananas and Beans. No, you don't have to eat these specific foods, but you should aim to eat the nutrients that each of these food groups represent.

Bagels (or any grain product): Carbohydrate/Starch

Broccoli (or any vegetable): Carbohydrate

Bananas (or any fruit): Carbohydrate

Beans (or any nuts, beans or legumes): Protein

CARBOHYDRATE serves as the primary energy source for working muscles and helps the body to use fat more efficiently. Carbohydrates are stored in the liver as glycogen, but the body can only store a small amount. Therefore, a high-carbohydrate diet is essential for long distance running performance, specifically marathon training. Approximately 60 to 70% of your diet should come from carbohydrates. Good sources are pasta, brown rice, potatoes, cereal, fruit, vegetables and whole grain products. It is important to ingest carbohydrates one to four hours before you run. If you intend to run for two hours or more, try drinking UltraFuel® about one hour before you run. This product contains 100 grams of carbohydrate and 400 calories. Consider it as a liquid food. It can generally be purchased in a health food store.

PROTEIN is used to build and repair body tissues including muscles, tendons and ligaments. Contrary to popular belief, protein is not a primary source of energy for long distance runners. Since the body has a limit as to the amount of protein it can ingest, any excess may be converted to fat. Only 12 to 15% of your diet should come from protein. Lean beef, chicken, turkey, fish, low fat cheese, eggs, beans, nuts and tofu are all good sources of protein. For more effective recovery, eat a small amount of protein (along with your carbohydrate) after you run. A peanut butter and jelly sandwich on whole wheat bread is a perfect recovery food. If you are training for a marathon, after a 12+ mile run, drink Endurox R4®. It is a great recovery drink, as it contains a four-to-one ratio of carbohydrate to protein. Drink this within 30 minutes after your long run for best recovery. It can generally be purchased in a health food store.

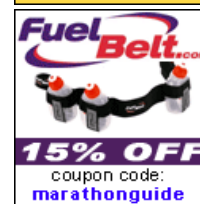
FAT is an energy source that insulates the body against cold and cushions vital organs. Because it exits the stomach slowly it may cause cramping, so it is best not to consume too much prior to your run. Fat burns most efficiently when combined with carbohydrates. There are three kinds of fat. Saturated fats include butter, hydrogenated oils, coconut oil and palm oil. Polyunsaturated fats include corn oil, soybean oil and margarine. Monounsaturated fats include olive oil, canola oil and peanut oil and are the preferred fat. Peanut butter is a good source of monounsaturated fat. Approximately 20 to 25% of your diet should come from fat, with only 10% of it coming from saturated fat.

VITAMINS AND MINERALS do not provide energy directly. However, they are essential nutrients involved in energy-producing reactions in the body. If your diet is well balanced, you should receive all the necessary vitamins and minerals. Although there is no scientific evidence that supplements will improve athletic performance, some may be helpful when training for a long distance event or marathon. Iron supplements may be required for women who menstruate or for athletes who are anemic. Fish, legumes and dark, green leafy vegetables are good iron sources. Calcium is necessary for bone formation. Non-fat and low-fat dairy products such as yogurt, milk and cheese are recommended. Electrolytes (salts) such as sodium, potassium and magnesium are necessary for maintaining fluid balance, blood volume and nerve transmission. These salts are released through sweat. On average, each foot can produce a pint of perspiration while running. Sports drinks contain electrolytes to replace those minerals. If you are running longer than one hour, you should be drinking a sports drink in addition to water.

WATER is the most important nutrient for runners. The body is made up of 65% water that must be replaced to maintain proper body temperature. Keep in mind that thirst is not an indicator of dehydration. Once you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Get into the habit of drinking water all day long. Also, check the color of your urine. It should be light and clear. A darker color indicates dehydration. Avoid carbonated drinks that can cause stomach distress and limit alcohol

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and caffeine since they are diuretics and contribute to fluid loss. If you weigh yourself before and after you run, you will know how much fluid you have lost. For every pound of body weight lost, drink 16 ounces of fluid.

Mindy Solkin is the Owner and Head Coach of The Running Center™. She is certified by USA Track & Field (USATF) as a Level III Running Coach (the highest level) and by the American Council on Exercise (ACE) as a personal trainer.

Known as "Coach Mindy" to her runners, she has coached thousands of people over the past ten years, helping them to achieve their goals on the open roads and the winding trail, whether it is running their first mile or pursuing their personal best in the marathon.

Mindy was the creator of the Leukemia-Lymphoma Society's Team In Training marathon program in New York City and served as its Head Coach from 1994 through 2001. From 1995 through 2002 training over 3,000 runners to run marathons in cities around the world, Mindy was the Head Coach at Reebok Sports Club/NY. She is also the creator of the Polar Heart Bra® and has been a PowerBar® Team Elite athlete since 1994. She can be reached at www.TheRunningCenter.com.

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