

Koslo's Korner

Basic Nutrition for Triathletes

You may already know something about what constitutes a healthy training or daily diet for an endurance athlete. But knowledge doesn't always translate into practice and taking a look at what you are actually eating never hurts. Having a basic understanding of nutrition will help you to fuel yourself with the right nutrients in order to help you perform at your best.

How many calories do you need to support your training?

The average high performing athlete should be eating in the vicinity of 25-30 calories per pound when training on a daily basis for over an hour per day. So does that give you free rein to eat whatever you want? Yes and No. You can definitely eat more but the right eating plan will give you energy, shorten your recovery time, and fuel your body more efficiently. This means it should include plenty of low fat, high carbohydrate foods to offer energy, lean proteins for tissue repair, and ample fluids for hydration.

The foundation of your diet should be carbohydrates which are easily converted into glycogen in your body. Glycogen is the primary energy source for your muscles. When you don't eat enough carbohydrates you may tire easily on your rides or take longer to recover. Most of the carbohydrates in your diet should be complex carbohydrates such as whole wheat bread, brown rice, oatmeal, and most vegetables. Simple carbohydrates are also an important source of nutrients and quick energy and include foods like fruits, white bread, sweets, sports drinks, and sugared cereals.

It is also important to include small amounts of protein in your meals for tissue repair and to aid in glycogen production and storage. Sources of protein include lean meats, eggs, low fat and fat free milk, cottage cheese, cheese, nuts, tofu, and beans.

Sources of "good" fats should be included in your plan as well. Fats serve many important functions in the body and provide fuel during low intensity activity. Cook with olive oil and include nuts, avocados, and vegetable oils in your diet. Avoid saturated fats like butter and trans fats found in partially hydrogenated oils. These types of fats contribute to heart disease.

Familiarize yourself with the MyPyramid guidance system (www.MyPyramid.gov). This is a good place to start for building a smart, well-balanced sports diet. Use the tools available to see how many calories you need and the number of servings from each of the food groups that you should be eating.

Have a question? Email me at jkoslo@koslosnutritionalsolutions.com

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