

When and What to Eat Before Exercise:

Are you wondering what you currently eat is appropriate for the type of exercise you do? Have you ever thought about what you eat before you exercise? Some people who exercise – no matter whether it is a gym session, running, tennis or other type of exercise – eat inappropriately. When and what to eat before a workout can be a mystery, therefore realbuzz.com hope to dispel some of the myths and get you on the right track to eating appropriately for exercising.

The two fuels that the body uses during exercise are carbohydrate and fat; during high and moderate intensity exercise more carbohydrate is used. The body stores carbohydrate in small amounts in the liver and muscles, as glycogen; it is therefore important to make sure that the glycogen stores of the liver and muscles are optimal before exercise as they are depleted during training. The carbohydrate in your diet will provide some energy during exercise mainly from starchy snacks and sugary drinks that you take immediately before and during exercise.

The best advice is to eat a meal three to four hours before exercise and have a small snack just before, ideally between one and two hours before your workout. So, if you plan to go to the gym at 5.30pm, try to have a meal (lunch) at 1.30pm and then a snack at 4pm.

Meal ideas – foods suitable for three to four hours before exercise:

- A small baked potato, baked beans or cottage cheese
- Six crackers and cottage cheese followed by a piece of fruit
- Oatmeal (made with low fat milk) with a banana and a teaspoon of sugar
- Rice with vegetables and lean meat
- Pasta and sauce (for example: low fat tomato and bacon sauce or Bolognese)
- Two slices of toast, peanut butter and a banana
- Two weetabix with low fat milk and a small glass of pure fruit juice
- A small baked potato with tuna and reduced fat mayonnaise and a fruit yogurt

Snack ideas – foods suitable for one to two hours before exercise:

- One slice of toast and jam
- One small granola bar
- One slice of fruit cake
- A piece of fruit
- Two crackers
- A fruit yogurt
- A cereal bar
- A small bowl of cereal and low fat milk
- A scone

When and what to drink before a workout

Appropriate drinking for exercise

Not only should you think about your food intake before exercise, but you also need to

consider the fluid that you drink. Don't turn up at the gym or go for a run dehydrated, you should be fully hydrated prior to taking any exercise. Dehydration is easy to detect, when you pass water make sure that it is as clear as possible. The darker the color of your urine, the more dehydrated you are. Also the frequency with which you pass urine can indicate whether you are drinking enough, if you only pass water once or twice a day it's time to consider drinking more fluid.

So what should I drink when I am exercising?

When you are exercising for less than an hour; water or a hypotonic drink (a drink providing more water than carbohydrate) is the best to take. This is recommended for people who are at the gym or running for less than an hour.

If you are unsure about whether you have had enough fluid before you exercise, try to keep a 'drinking diary'. This will help you remember to keep hydrated and maintain your fluid intake throughout the day before you exercise.

By [Vanessa Wright](#)

Top Ten Foods For Runners:

If you focus on eating the most suitable foods to support your training, you'll not only feel better, you'll perform better too – which is a great incentive to eat well! However, with our busy lifestyles and the huge range of foods so readily available these days, it can be difficult to follow an optimum eating plan to support your exercise – which is where realbuzz.com comes in. In the following article we've assembled the top ten best runner's foods – so, if your nutrition could do with a review simply read this guide – which includes:

- **Meal ideas**
- **Runner's snack suggestions**
- **Post-training-run energy boosters**

What are the best foods for runners?

Ask any runner what the best food is to support their training, and nine times out of ten the answer will come back as 'pasta'. **Pasta is not only the runner's food of choice, it's also ideally suited to fuelling your training and racing, as it provides unprocessed, slow-release energy**, which is particularly suitable for endurance events such as the marathons.

A diet of pasta alone doesn't make for a balanced nutrition plan, though. The most common mistake that runners make is to focus so much on fuel that they neglect repair and rebuilding, which is provided by protein. When you run, every footstep can damage blood cells and your muscles can also suffer from microscopic damage. However, **a diet that includes good-quality low-fat protein – found in lean meat and fish – will ensure that your muscles remain in tip-top condition**. So, protein is a very important component of your diet.

Also, as a runner your hydration requirements will be greater than that of sedentary people and you're more likely to need 'food on the go' – so **fluids and snacks are also important**.

Put all the above elements – pasta, protein, fluids and snacks – together and you've got the top ten runner's foods!

The top 10 foods for runners

- **Pasta.** We've already mentioned pasta but it's still an excellent place to begin. Pre-race pasta parties are popular for a reason – and that's because if you're competing in a race such as a marathon, pasta can make the difference between hitting the wall or steaming straight through it! Pasta is an easily digestible, extremely varied dish that provides slow release-energy – which is exactly what a marathon runner needs. Even if your event of choice isn't the marathon, pasta is still an excellent, low-fat staple to have – and combined with low-fat protein such as lean mince or tuna, it makes an excellent runner's refuelling package.
- **Bananas.** The original snack food, readily available and requiring no preparation, the banana is the healthy equivalent of fast food. It is ideal for rapid refuelling and

comes in its own biodegradable wrapper! For slower-release energy, choose greener fruit, whereas if you're after more of a quick energy 'hit' then get browner, riper fruit, as the different colour indicates that the banana has more fruit sugar – which makes it better for a post-run snack.

- **Oatmeal.** The number one breakfast food, oatmeal basically consists of unprocessed oats – and nothing else! If made with skimmed or low fat milk, it will provide the optimum mix of protein, fibre and slow-release energy. Whether you're eating it pre-race, pre-training run or – even better still – as a regular daily starter, you can't beat the original breakfast food to get you going each morning. Watch out for oatmeal look-alikes, though, such as instant varieties or oaty-type cereals, because although they are a far healthier option than many sugar-laden cereals, they are a less suitable choice than pure and simple oatmeal.
- **Other breakfast cereals.** Second best to oatmeal but still excellent runner's foods are other breakfast cereals such as muesli and items containing high wheat ingredients. Providing you check the ingredients list for added sugar and fat, there are many cereals that can be consumed as excellent pre-event foods. Try to avoid sugar-coated-type cereals and many of the varieties that are marketed towards children, though, because nutritionally they are extremely poor and will not ideally prepare you in the morning for your training or race.
- **Water.** Although not a 'food' in the strict sense, water is a key component for everyone – and runners in particular. As a runner, you lose a considerable amount of fluid through sweating and on the breath – so even in cold weather you will still have to focus on hydration. You should endeavour to be continually topping up your fluid levels as you run – and drinking water is the easiest way to do this. A minimum of two litres per day should be your basic target, or more in hot weather and on training days.
- **Glucose drinks.** Sometimes perceived as 'the enemy', glucose drinks actually do have a place in the runner's nutrition plan. In addition to supporting your running in long distance races, a glucose drink should be your food of choice after a training session. The first 15 minutes after you finish exercising is the 'golden window' for optimum refuelling, when your body is most receptive to restocking your fuel tanks and does so at a faster than normal rate. If you consume a glucose drink after your run, you will maximise your refuelling during the golden window, and also commence re-hydrating at the same time!
- **Cereal bars.** For an easy-to-pack, generally healthy snack, a cereal bar is extremely handy. Cereal bars have a long shelf life, and compared with many other foods (such as bananas) don't object to being bashed around in your gym bag – so they're excellent standbys. However, not all cereal bars are equal – some have as much fat and sugar in them as chocolate bars! So read your labels with care and choose varieties that have as few ingredients as possible – which means that they're less likely to be laden with additives and unnecessary chemicals.

- **Rice.** Similar to pasta, rice is also an excellent ‘long-distance’ food, and is both easy to prepare and readily available. Opt for boiling or steaming rice rather than frying it, otherwise you’ll be adding a load of unnecessary calories. Additionally, try to select wholegrain varieties which will provide more fibre – further helping the slow-release energy process.
- **Lean meat and fish.** By avoiding the fatty cuts of meat and concentrating on skinless, low-fat varieties, or alternatively fish, you’ll be providing your body with the necessary building blocks for repair. For a runner in heavy training, as much as 1.5g of protein per kilogram of bodyweight may need to be consumed per day – which is a lot to get through, so you’ll need to work at keeping your protein intake at the correct level. Try to include protein with each meal, and focus on animal types over vegetable proteins because animal proteins are complete, containing the full complement of amino acids needed by the human body, whereas vegetable proteins are incomplete, and are missing some amino acids. Vegetable proteins therefore have to be eaten in combination with other foods for the body to be able to use the protein effectively.
- **Fruit and vegetables.** Everyone should be focusing on a minimum of the ‘five-a-day’ fruit and veg strategy – but runners should try to get even more, because their energy and overall nutrition requirements are greater. Choose darker varieties, as they contain more nutrients – for example, broccoli has far more iron in it than iceberg lettuce. Also, watch your fibre intake, because otherwise you could find yourself stuck in the smallest room instead of pounding the trails!

How’s your running pantry?

There are many similarities between a standard healthy nutrition plan and one for runners. However, if you want to get the most out of your running, it makes sense to focus on a healthy diet generally, plus increase your water intake and monitor how much protein you eat. These additional elements will mean you are better prepared, recover better and avoid the risk of over-fatigue, illness or injury.

Enjoy your running and your nutrition!

By [Mike Searle](#)