



Nutrition & Hydration Tips

It's important to keep your body fueled up and hydrated during the ride. A good rule of thumb? Eat before you're hungry and drink before you're thirsty. That, and timing, timing, timing. Read on for helpful details on how to treat your body right!

Eat before the ride

Unlike some forms of physical activity, biking on a full stomach is a **GOOD** thing! The smooth pedaling motion means you can eat shortly before and during rides. You should start off with a full stomach if the ride stretches over 90 minutes, because cycling consumes about 40 calories per mile. An hour prior to starting your ride, consume some carbohydrates (about 60 grams of carbohydrate if you're an average-sized woman, 80 to 100 grams if you're a man). How much is that? Most energy bars contain about 40 grams of carbs and a banana packs about 30. Or try a bagel with jam and a handful of raisins or a fruit bar.

Pre-hydrate

Being sufficiently hydrated before your ride is equally as important as your food intake. Drinking coffee and caffeinated beverages like sodas rather than water, can contribute to chronic dehydration. Research shows that it's difficult to rehydrate with water alone. Drink water copiously all day, and about an hour before the ride try to drink about 16 ounces of a sports drink.

Eat and drink during the ride

Drink before you feel thirsty. Your body's sensation of thirst lags behind its need for liquid, so when you feel thirsty, it's already too late. Make it a habit to reach for your water bottle every 15 minutes and drink four to six ounces. Additionally, try to eat around 20 grams of carbohydrates every 30 minutes. That could be half an energy bar several fig bars, half a banana or a piece of bagel.

Hydrate after the ride

No matter how much fluid you ingest while riding, the hot weather will leave you feeling depleted. Want proof? There's a simple way to be sure you've rehydrated after the ride – simply weigh yourself before and after, and compare the figures. If you're down some pounds, it's because you've sweated out your body's water. You'll need to drink 20 ounces of fluid for each pound of body weight you've lost while pedaling. Keep drinking until your weight has returned to normal.

The glycogen window

One last step – but it is arguably the most important! Studies show that your muscles replace their fuel (glycogen) much faster and more efficiently if you eat plentiful carbohydrates immediately after your ride. Remember, your goal is to eat 60 grams of carbohydrate if you're an average-sized woman or 80 to 100 grams if you're an average male. Your muscles will refuel best if you consume these 15 minutes after the ride. The refueling process becomes less efficient after a two-hour post-ride "glycogen window." Research also indicates that if you mix four parts carbohydrate with one part protein, your glycogen stores will top off quicker. That's as simple as having cereal, a banana, and some skim milk for protein after your ride.

If you follow these steps, you'll feel great while riding and recover faster!