Nutrition continues to be a much discussed topic amongst marathon runners. Questions about what to eat before, during, and after the race are commonly asked by beginners and even advanced runners.

Interestingly, the story does not start in the week before the race, like training it starts many weeks before the event! After a race it also seems to be one of the main topics, especially for runners who did not achieve their goals or had problems along the way.

Training and nutrition are the two of the most important factors determining performance on race day. Most runners spend many hours per week training, planning, and preparing their training sessions… but how much time is spent on nutrition? Often, nutrition is taken for granted and this could jeopardize all the hours and days of hard training.

The Early Preparation

Preparation starts many weeks before the event. You need to know some of the basics of the race like: what nutrition will be provided on course, where are the feed stations, and what are the weather conditions likely to be. You may not be able to influence the weather, but you can prepare for the conditions. Finding out what nutrition is going to be handed out is important too because **it IS a good idea to practice with this nutrition and make sure you can tolerate it and you can adapt to it.** If you can’t tolerate it, it is better to find out weeks in advance than on race day.

Train Your Race Plan

The first step is to figure out what nutrition works best for you. This includes not only products, but timing as well. Start practicing this **now**, pick your long run training to practice and follow your plan, or build up to it. As mentioned above, first try using the products that will be available on the course. If those do not agree with you, start experimenting with other products.

Helpful tips:

* Study the course, the nutrition on course and develop a plan.
* Practice practice practice: Train with your race nutrition plan, train with the drinks on course, train with gels or whatever you will use.
* Practice your breakfast plan and also the meal plan the night before. Find out what works best for you.

Race Day:

* Stick to your nutrition plan, but don’t stick to it at all cost.
* Don’t experiment with anything new. Stick to what you have practiced.
* Aim for 30-60 grams per hour.
* Use sports drinks gels, chews, bars, depending on your personal preference. You can mix and match to achieve your carbohydrate goals.
* Avoid high fiber fat and protein intake during the run.
* Don’t overdrink, don’t under drink. Try to match our sweat loss or a little less. Some weight loss at the end (2% of your body weight is fine).
* Don’t use excessive salt or electrolyte intake.

Take Aways:

* Start practicing your plan today. It takes time to train your body to process nutrition intake.
* Determine how you will carry all of your nutrition with you race day.
* Practice, Practice, Practice.