



Nutrition and Marathon Preparation

Nutrition is a key part of marathon preparation. Alongside a structured training plan, the right nutrition helps you to fuel your training session, recover effectively between runs and reduce the risk of illness, injury and fatigue.

The further you get into your training plan (and as weekly mileage builds) energy and nutrition demand increases. This makes it essential to pay attention not just to what you eat on long run days, but to your overall eating pattern throughout the week. Establishing good nutrition habits now will provide a strong foundation for the more demanding stages of marathon training ahead. Below are some nutrition tips you can follow as you prepare to take on your marathon!

1. Build meals around carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the body's preferred fuel source for moderate to high intensity exercise, like running.

Include a **high-fibre carbohydrate source** at each meal as they have a lower glycemic index. This means that food is converted from carbohydrate to glucose more slowly, giving a slow, sustained energy release throughout the day.

Examples

- Wholegrain bread, wraps or rolls
- Oats or high fibre breakfast cereals like All Bran, Weetabix or Special K
- Rice, pasta or quinoa
- Starchy vegetables like potatoes, pumpkin or butternut squash
- Beans, peas and lentils

2. Prioritise recovery after sessions

After long runs and harder training sessions, aim to eat **within 1 to 2 hours** of finishing to support muscle repair and help replenish fuel stores.

Be sure to include:

- carbohydrate-rich foods to replace energy (glucose) stores.
- protein-rich foods to help repair and rebuild muscle tissue after exercise.

Examples

- Porridge with milk and fruit
- Chicken or bean wrap with salad and hummus
- Yoghurt with fruit and granola
- Tuna or egg sandwich on wholegrain bread

3. Include protein regularly throughout the day

Protein should not just be prioritised after training. Spreading protein intake across the day is important because muscle protein synthesis (MPS – the process that repairs and builds muscle) responds best to repeated protein feedings rather than one large dose. Include a lean protein source with each meal and in snacks.

Examples

- Milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Eggs
- Fish and poultry
- Lean meat
- Beans, lentils and tofu
- Nuts and seeds

4. Practise your nutrition strategy for longer runs

For runs longer than 60 minutes, aim to consume **30 to 60g of carbohydrate** per hour. For longer runs over 2.5 hours, you could increase your intake to **60 to 90g of carbohydrate** if you can tolerate it.

It is important you test this during training to see what works for you and your body, and do not try anything new on race day.

- Test different snacks or sports nutrition products. Practise drinking while running.
- Identify foods and drinks that sit comfortably within your stomach.

Examples of what approx. 30g carbohydrate looks like

- 1 sports gel (check packet for precise carbohydrate)
- 5-6 jelly babies
- 3 large jelly snakes
- 8 glucose tablets
- 250ml of fruit juice

5. Stay on top of hydration

Even mild dehydration can affect performance and recovery.

- Drink regularly throughout the day.
- Check your urine colour (dark yellow indicates poorer hydration while pale yellow generally indicates good hydration).
- Bring fluids on longer training runs, particularly in warmer weather.

6. Don't neglect everyday nutrition

Marathon preparation is about consistent habits, not just long-run days.

Focus on:

- regular meals
- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- wholegrain carbohydrates
- healthy fats such as nuts, seeds and oily fish
- adequate sleep and recovery

As your training increases, focus on building good nutrition habits. Fuel and hydrate regularly, recover well after your runs and practise your race day nutrition strategy. Doing this consistently will help you train better, recover faster and arrive at the start line feeling strong and prepared!