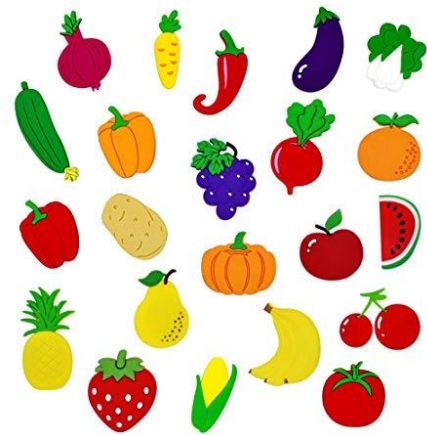


NUTRITION INFO

If you someone offered you a safe and legal strategy that could see you shave minutes off your finish time or set a new PB, would you take it? Of course you would – you'd be crazy not to! Then it's time to get serious about your nutrition plans for the event.

No matter what event you're tackling, there's no doubt that what you eat and drink will either make or break your race day experience – after all, you won't run out of fitness, but you might run out of fuel. Here are a few tips to get you to the start line in optimal condition and power through your ride successfully.



Training Nutrition

Match your carbs to your training

Carbohydrates, most riders know about how good they can be and many have experienced the dreaded bonk when plans haven't quite gone as hoped! As the main fuel for our body during high intensity exercise, having insufficient carbs in your diet means your training is likely to suffer. At lower intensities (e.g. easy effortless spinning) your body can use fat stores as fuel, but as soon as the intensity ramps up (and you start puffing), your body relies on carbs to fuel your muscles and your brain.

Importantly though, "adequate" carbs doesn't mean "eating heaps of carbs all the time". There may be times where it's advantageous to train with lower glycogen stores in your muscles to simulate the latter stages of the race and having excess carbs in your diet can make it difficult to manage your weight. Put simply, timing is everything when it comes to carbohydrates. Heavy training days require more fuel, and therefore more carbs. On the flip side, fuel (and carbohydrate) needs are lower on easy training days or rest days.

Finding the balance in your daily carb needs requires an individual approach but [here's an example of what](#) a heavy training day and light training day might look like.

Protein is important for back-to-back training sessions

Training for the Otway Odyssey requires a high volume of training, and often this means long training rides and usually training on most days of the week. Without sufficient

protein after a session, muscle repair and recovery (and therefore your training) can be compromised.

The body needs ~20-30g of protein after training to maximally stimulate muscle recovery. This can either be eaten as a specific recovery snack, or your next main meal. If the time between your training sessions is short (less than 8-12 hours), getting this protein in within 60-90 minutes after you finish training is important.

Some examples of suitable recovery snacks and meals that you may like to try after training include:

- Fruit smoothie
- Flavoured milk
- Poached eggs on toast
- Muesli with yoghurt, nuts and berries
- Tuna on crackers
- Grilled salmon with a grain-based salad (e.g. quinoa/couscous)
- Chicken stir-fry with rice or noodles

Prepare for the heat

February in Victoria can be very warm so it's important to prepare for competing in the heat. Understanding your individual fluid needs is the first step to developing a hydration plan for race day. It's impossible to give a general recommendation for hourly fluid requirements as each person has a unique sweat rate that ultimately determines fluid needs. It's best to assess your sweat rate in conditions that are as similar as possible to race day (e.g. during a training session at race pace in weather conditions as close as possible to race day). Once you have a clearer understanding of your sweat losses and fluid needs, additional planning can be made to determine the timing of fluid intake, type of fluid and whether or not additional salt is required to supplement your electrolyte needs.

Practice and Refine

Training sessions are the ideal time to refine and practice your race day nutrition. Practicing your race day nutrition plan in training allows you to figure out what works for you and what doesn't. Trial and error can determine what sits well in your stomach, what makes you feel nauseous, what's awkward to eat on the move, what packaging is easy to open with one hand or your teeth, etc.

Things to consider when determining your race day plan:

- How much carbohydrate do you need to take during the ride? This will depend on a number of individual factors such as your predicted race time, previous experiences, body size.
- What type/s of carbohydrates will you use during the race (e.g. gels, sports drinks, carbohydrate rich wholefoods, etc)?
- Do you need use a mix of sweet and savoury carb options? Gels might be great for a few hours but it's easy to get sweetness fatigue if you don't mix things up with savoury options.
- How will you use your checkpoint nutrition stops to your advantage?
- How will you practically carry your race day nutrition (e.g. bananas squash easily, banana chips don't; al-foil tears, glad wrap can be hard to open)?
- How will you consume your race day nutrition? Will you use a hydration backpack, drink bottles or a combination?
- How will you time your nutrition over the race? Do you need a timer alert on your watch to keep you on target or will you eat by kilometres?

Refining and practicing your race day plan will make sure that you feel confident in your nutrition on the big day. The less nutrition decisions you have to make during the ride, the more you can concentrate on racing.

Race Day Nutrition

1. Load up

Most competitors are aware of the need to carbohydrate load before race day to optimise the body's muscle glycogen (stored carbohydrate) levels. What is sometimes overlooked however, is the timing and amount of carbohydrate needed during the loading period – it's more than just big bowl of pasta the night before racing.

Carbohydrate loading should take place over the 48 hours prior to race day and usually requires somewhere between 6-10g of carbohydrate per kilogram body weight (which is equal to 420-600g for a 70kg athlete). This is a big range and it's important to know your individual target to have your muscles primed on race day but without leaving you feeling heavy and nauseous at the start line. It's also a good idea to think about dropping your fibre intake in the days leading up to the race to avoid unwanted toilet stops!



2. Don't ditch last chance fuelling

Breakfast on race day is your last chance to top up your fuel stores and prime your body for the race ahead. Too often, athletes get nervous and ditch breakfast at the last minute. This can leave you behind your fuelling target from the start and it's almost impossible to catch up once you begin racing.

If you're a nervous athlete, or someone who struggles to eat on race morning there are a few things you could try:

- Add in an extra carb-rich supper snack just before bed the night before to reduce the amount you need to eat in the morning
- Keep your breakfast light – try toast or english muffins with jam
- Use carb-rich liquids (e.g. sports drink, juice, liquid meal tetras) as part of your breakfast fuelling plan – liquids empty more quickly from your stomach than solids.

3. Stick with your plan (but have a back-up)

You've practiced your plan in training and you know it works so stick to it! There's no benefit in trying something new on race day and more often than not, trying something new can end terribly. Having said that, it's important to have a back-up plan 'just in case'. For example, it's worth leaving some extra gels at the checkpoint in case you're finding it hard to get down the banana or jam sandwich that you intended to eat.

4. One-percenters worth a shot

There's no question that carbs and hydration are the two essential race day nutrition strategies that determine race day success. However, if you're looking for an extra edge, something that might just bump you up a place or two in the rankings, consider caffeine. Caffeine works to reduce your perception of effort, meaning that you can sustain a higher intensity/output for longer. It also helps with concentration and skill execution which can be critical on technical courses. Many sports gels contain caffeine but flat cola soft drink or caffeinated tablets such as No Doz are also useful options. The most important thing with caffeine is to practice using it in training and find the smallest amount that gives you a performance boost. This is usually between 1-3mg caffeine per kilogram body weight (e.g. 70-210mg for a 70kg athlete). More is definitely not better when it comes to caffeine and too much can actually impair performance.