

CYCLING PERFORMANCE TIPS

NUTRITION PLANS FOR 6 COMMON TYPES OF RIDES

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Different rides will require different nutritional support plans. In addition to differing Caloric requirements and recommendations, there are some specific do's and don'ts. This section will look at the 6 common types of rides and make recommendations on the 4 diet periods for each ride.

THE COMMUTE or SOCIAL RIDE

This ride is done at a comfortable pace of 50-60% VO₂ max. for 1 to 2 hours daily. The goal is to have a comfortable ride with energy left for the remainder of the day.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 60-70% Calories from carbohydrates
- **4 hours prior** - eat a high carbohydrate breakfast 30 to 45 minutes before the ride
- **4 minutes before** - nothing special
- **during the ride** - **eating is optional** for a ride of **2 hours or less**
- **post ride** - a mid morning snack might be a good idea but is not essential; a good balanced diet will replace the glycogen used during the ride
- **fluids** - one water bottle per hour, perhaps a bit more in hot weather

BASIC TRAINING RIDE

This ride is just a bit **longer than the 2 hour limit** that can lead to the bonk, **so snacking on the bike is important**. As intensity increases above 60%, it is more important to avoid eating in the 4 hour pre-ride interval to avoid GI distress.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 60-70% Calories from carbohydrates; at least 600 grams of carbohydrate the day prior to the ride
- **4 hours prior** - if the intensity is moderate, eating during this interval is OK; avoid excessively fatty foods and try to eat 2 hours before the ride
- **4 minutes prior** - nothing special
- **during the ride** - start eating regular snacks, energy gels, or sports drinks at the beginning of the ride to replace the estimated calories burned per hour
- **post ride** - a post ride carbohydrate snack, particularly in the 10 to 15 minutes immediately afterwards, will take advantage of the window of maximum glycogen resynthesis and may cut down on muscle soreness
- **fluids** - one water bottle per hour, perhaps a bit more in hot weather

INTERVALS

For intervals, it is key to have your stomach empty or you risk the GI distress that goes with exercising close to or above 100% VO₂ max. You will also sweat more so that fluid replacement needs to be watched. If this is a ride of less than 1 1/2 to 2 hours, there is probably not a need to carbo supplement during the ride.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 60-70% Calories from carbohydrates
- **4 hours prior** - don't eat in the 4 hours before this training ride
- **4 minutes prior** - nothing special, a candy bar or energy bar is OK if you're feeling hungry
- **during the ride** - depends on the total time/distance to be covered. If it's truly focused on intervals, no carbs are needed
- **post ride** - a post ride carbohydrate snack, particularly in the 10 to 15 minutes immediately afterwards, will take advantage of the window for maximum glycogen resynthesis and may cut down on muscle soreness
- **fluids** - one water bottle per hour as an absolute minimum

LONG DISTANCE

This ride will definitely cause you to bonk if you don't replace carbohydrates, so snacking on the bike is essential. As intensity increases above 60% VO₂ max., it becomes more important to avoid eating in the 4 hour pre-ride interval to avoid GI distress. If this is really planned as a slow, long training ride, that is not as important. A 300 gram carbohydrate meal 3 to 4 hours before this ride helps "top off the tank" so to speak in terms of muscle glycogen stores.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 70-80 % Calories from carbohydrates; at least 600 grams per day of carbohydrates in the 2 to 3 days prior to the ride
- **4 hours prior** - if the intensity is moderate, eating during this interval is OK, but avoid fatty foods and eat at least 2 hours before the ride. A 300 gram carbohydrate meal 3 to 4 hour pre-ride is recommended if possible
- **4 minutes prior** - nothing special
- **during the ride** - regular snacks, energy gels, or sports drinks to replace the estimated calories burned per hour
- **post ride** - a post ride carbohydrate snack, particularly in the 10 to 15 minutes immediately afterwards, will take advantage of the window for maximum glycogen resynthesis and may cut down on muscle soreness. Eat a high carbohydrate meal that night after the ride. fluids - one water bottle per hour, perhaps a bit more in hot weather

COMPETITIVE EVENT

This is what it's all about, and good nutrition and planning your eating strategy can make a difference. You will need a good carbohydrate base to maximize your muscle glycogen reserves. And you need to avoid eating in the 4 hour pre-event interval to keep your stomach empty or you risk the GI distress that goes with exercising close to or above 100% VO₂ max. You will also sweat more so fluid replacement needs to be watched. If this is a ride of less than 1 1/2 to 2 hours, there is no need to carbo supplement during the ride.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 60-70% Calories from carbohydrates; 600 grams of carbohydrate per day in the three days prior to the event
- **4 hours prior** - don't eat in the 4 hours before this ride
- **4 minutes prior** - a candy bar, energy bar, or other carbohydrate snack is a good idea

- **during the ride** - even for an event of 1 1/2 hours or less, a liquid carbohydrate supplement should be used. And if it's going to be longer, you will definitely need carbohydrate supplements (beginning regular snacks, energy gels, or sports drinks as soon as the event starts to replace the estimated calories burned per hour
- **post ride** - a post ride carbohydrate snack, particularly in the 10 to 15 minutes immediately afterwards, will take advantage of the window for maximum glycogen resynthesis and may cut down on muscle soreness. Eat a high carbohydrate meal that night to replace the muscle glycogen that was probably completely depleted during the event.
- **fluids** - one water bottle per hour as an absolute minimum

MULTI-DAY RIDE or BIKE TOUR

This ride is basically the same as the long training ride, but you need to be very careful to eat a high carbohydrate meal each evening or you will slowly become glycogen depleted and chronic fatigue will develop. If this is going to be a high intensity event on certain days, (intensity above 60% VO₂ max.), it is important to avoid eating in the 4 hour pre-ride interval to avoid GI distress. But on those long slow days, that's not an issue. A 300 gram carbohydrate meal each day 3 to 4 hours before the ride will maximize glycogen reserves. This is the dietary program most appropriate for a multi-day bike tour.

- **4 days prior** - balanced diet with 60-70% Calories from carbohydrates; at least 600 grams per day of carbohydrates in the 2 to 3 days prior to the ride
- **4 hours prior** - if the intensity is moderate, eating during this interval is OK, but avoid fatty foods and eat 2 hours before the ride. A 300 gram carbohydrate meal 3 to 4 hour pre ride is recommended.
- **4 minutes prior** - nothing special
- **during the ride** - regular snacks, energy gels, or sports drinks to replace the estimated calories burned per hour
- **post ride** - a post ride carbohydrate snack, particularly in the 10 to 15 minutes immediately afterwards, will take advantage of the window for maximum glycogen resynthesis and may cut down on muscle soreness. Eat a high carbohydrate meal that night after the ride, and try to eat at least 600 grams of carbohydrate per day above and beyond that needed to replace the Calories burned on that day's ride.
- **fluids** - one water bottle per hour, perhaps a bit more in hot weather

A few additional tips for those trips that will have long back-to-back days on the bike.

- Train with long back-to-back rides. You can train for a single century by riding long once a week because the event calls for just one day of exertion -- and then you can rest. But to build the stamina for a week (or two) of daily rides you should train with several long, back to back, rides.
- Replace those Calories in training. When you're maxing those training miles, you need to replace the Calories you are burning (and fluids too) to keep muscle glycogen stores intact. If you skimp, you run the risk of increasing your level of fatigue.
- Respect your contact points. Keep your hands, feet and saddle area happy. Pain in any of those areas can ruin a good adventure. Think twice about using new gear.
- Beware of overtraining. It's tempting to put in big miles to prepare for the week. Going too fast (and often) has its own set of risks. Train smart.