

Food for middle distance running

About middle distance running

Middle distance running includes events ranging in distance from 800m to 5000m, taking 90 odd seconds to 15-30 minutes to complete depending on training level. The training for middle distance running is usually much longer than the events and includes a variety of intensities including long easy runs, interval sessions, fartlek running and repetitions. Training may be 1-2 times daily 6-7 days per week depending on the level of competition.

Training Diet

Middle distance runners have high energy requirements to maintain the training volume required. Middle distance runners need to ensure they eat enough food and take advantage of opportunities to eat. This may require special attention. The training diet should contain plenty of carbohydrate-rich and low fat foods.

Sample meal plan for training

Meal	Food	Drink
Breakfast	Cereal + skim milk + toasted English muffin + jam	Fruit juice, water
Snack	Fruit scroll + fruit +/- dry biscuits	Water
Lunch	Turkey & Salad roll + low fat muesli bar	Low fat fruit Smoothie, water
Snack	Fruit + cereal bar / honey sandwich	Water, cordial
Dinner	Chicken & vegetable risotto + crusty bread, tinned fruit + low fat custard	Water, cordial, juice
Snack	Toasted fruit loaf + jam	Milo + skim milk
Extra: Rice crackers & salsa, sugar-type lollies		
Comments: Food volumes will vary depending on training duration, intensity & fitness level		

Fluid Needs

Middle distance runners have large fluid requirements secondary to training duration and fluid losses. During the day water is the fluid of choice, however fluids containing carbohydrate (eg. Cordial, juice) may help to ensure carbohydrate requirements are met in the athlete with high energy demands. Similarly, sports drinks containing 4-8% carbohydrate are the preferred fluid choice during training to encourage both fluid and carbohydrate intake

What Should I Eat Pre-Event?

Pre event eating should be similar to eating before training, ideally eating 2 hours before competing so that food can be emptied from the stomach. Pre event eating should include carbohydrate rich foods such as breakfast cereal, bread, rice, pasta and dry biscuits. Ideally pre event eating should be practised in training before competition.

What Should I Eat/Drink During Competition?

During most races fluid intake is neither necessary nor practical due to the short duration and high intensity of these events. However, it is important to start well hydrated and replace fluid losses after competing, especially if competing in multiple events or heats and finals on the same day.

What About Recovery?

A single race is unlikely to exhaust fuel stores, although recovering to compete in multiple events over a day or for training the following day is important. If competing in multiple events over a day be sure to plan ahead by taking practical carbohydrate-rich snacks such as fruit, cereal bars or sandwiches with you to eat between events. If recovering to compete or train the next day the key is to resume the training eating pattern as early as practical.

Are supplements necessary?

There is limited scientific support for ergogenic aids in competition events of this duration. Carbohydrate-rich liquid meal replacers may help a busy athlete to meet their carbohydrate requirements and maybe useful as a pre event meal in some situations

Other Nutrition Tips

The volume of food and the practical aspects of meeting energy and carbohydrate requirements will vary with the level of training and from athlete to athlete. A Sports Dietitian can help you assess your individual needs to meet your performance goals