

It's important to have a nutrition plan for the week leading up to your marathon. Not only will this provide the perfect complement to your taper, but it will also get you to the starting line ready to run your best.

### **Five To Seven Days Out: Ease Up On Distance.**

During most weeks of marathon training, your muscles never have a chance to fully reload with glycogen. Runners and other endurance athletes simply need to back off on training for a few days and muscle enzymes responsible for restocking glycogen will gradually begin to store more carbohydrates, helping build up your energy reserves for race day. Make sure you're consuming at least three grams of carbohydrate per half a kilogram of body weight during this time period to meet your needs.

### **Three To Four Days Out: Up The Carbs.**

Boosting carbohydrate intake to 3.5 to four grams for every half a kilogram of body weight (about 600 grams per day for a 68-kilogram runner) will further increase your glycogen stores. The key is to back off on fat and protein to help balance your kilojoule intake and avoid gaining weight. Even with those cutbacks, this higher carb intake may supply too many kilojoules for your needs. If you notice you start to gain more than a couple kilograms, tweak your diet, reducing your carb intake until your weight balances out.

### **Two To Three Days Out: Cut Out Bulk.**

Limiting high-fibre foods such as bran cereals, whole grains, and large amounts of vegetables for the few days prior to a race has multiple benefits. Research shows that eating a lower fibre diet can help lighten the weight of material in the intestines. This can reduce your body weight (potentially leading to faster running times) and may help you avoid the need for a mid-race pit stop that would otherwise add time to your race.

### **Two To Four Hours Out: Eat!**

A pre-race meal supplies extra carbs to top off glycogen stores, particularly in the liver, which will help steady blood sugar levels during the race. Aim for .5 to one gram for every half a kilogram of body weight (about 75 to 150 grams for a 68-kilogram runner)—but only eat the higher range if you have four full hours to digest. Back off on fats and keep protein to about 15 grams or fewer—both nutrients take longer to digest. A study found that for novice marathoners, eating a high-carb pre-race meal was an important predictor of finishing times: runners who ate ample carbs ran faster than those who skimped.

### **Mid-Race: Fuel Up According To Plan.**

Put your training to work: Fuel up with at least 30 to 60 grams—and up to 90 or 100 grams if your gut tolerated it during training and you're planning to race hard—of easily digestible carbs per hour (spread it out, such as every kilometre or so). Fluid intake should also go according to training, keeping the temperature in mind; sweat

losses will be less in cooler weather. Studies show mild dehydration (one to two percent loss of body weight) will not hamper performance, so avoid over consuming fluids. Not only will it make you heavier, but also you'll risk diluting electrolytes, a potentially serious medical condition. If you feel yourself start to fade during the second half of the race (and who doesn't?), try a hit of caffeine (30 to 50 milligrams) from an energy gel, chews, or drink. Studies show this modest amount helps boost alertness and may provide a second wind.