



NUTRITION NOTES FROM TALK WITH HEIDI STRICKLER by AUDREY

Anemia - Anemia is very common in runners partly because of foot strike hemolysis, so it is important for athletes to get enough iron in their diet. If you think you might be anemic you can get your ferritin levels tested.

- Women/people who menstruate: people with periods are more likely to be anemic because of blood loss.
- Vegetarians/vegans: people who eat a plant-based diet are more predisposed to anemia because it is harder to absorb iron.
- Vegetarians should try to eat more plant-based iron, eat foods with vitamin C.
- If you are worried about iron absorption you can avoid eating a lot of calcium while eating iron rich meals. For example if you are having a meal of broccoli and steak, save milk or ice cream for another time in the day.
- It can also help to eat a high-iron meal 2+ hours away from exercise so you can absorb it better.

Q. At camp, they said that Hispanic people were more likely to be anemic, which some people felt was racist because they didn't have any evidence of why that would be. Is that accurate?

A. It is possible that certain people are genetically more predisposed to anemia, but it mostly has to do with diet.

Q. Is it bad to take plant-based iron?

A. You shouldn't take iron supplements unless you have had your iron levels tested and it's been recommended that you supplement. If your iron is low, your doctor can help you know what sort of iron supplements to take.

Relative Energy Deficiency Syndrome (RED-S) is a syndrome that occurs when athletes are not getting enough fuel for their sport, regular activities, and growth.

RED-S is extremely common among athletes, especially female athletes.

- RED-S can be extremely dangerous, and can very quickly start causing issues, especially with hormones.
- RED-S can eventually cause immune system problems, strain your heart, weaken your bones, and lead to period loss.
- ****Period loss isn't normal****
- Make sure your period is regular, losing periods is very dangerous and can lead to many issues including increasing risk of stress fracture.

- Think of your energy as a bank account, you should still have a positive amount of energy when you go to sleep each night. When you wake up, since your body has been working all night without any food, you have almost no fuel. If you exercise without giving your body fuel, you will be in "energy debt."
- Eating consistently throughout the day will help your energy levels.
- Be aware of unhealthy things that are normalized for runners, such as having too low of a low heart rate. Distance runners have more efficient hearts, but there is a point where it becomes dangerously low (men should be above 40bpm, women should be above 50 bpm).
- Well-nourished athletes=better athletes with more longevity

****Your ideal race weight is your natural weight****

- Losing weight is not a long-term way to be faster. Even if losing weight shaves a few seconds off your time in one race, under-fueling will catch up to you. If you are underweight, you will not be able to kick at the end of races, you will get sick more often, you will get injured easier, and you will not consistently have energy for practice.
- Everyone has different genetics/natural builds. Don't compare your body or your eating habits to other runners, instead find what works best for you.
- Athletes almost never overeat.

Q. How should we stay fueled throughout the day when we aren't allowed to eat during class at school because of COVID protocols? If we feel we didn't eat enough should we skip workouts?

A. If you are feeling very low energy that is something you should talk to your coach about, but there are ways to eat enough during the day. Make sure to get breakfast every day and eat a snack right before running.

Meals and Snacks

Breakfast

- It is very important to eat breakfast every day. Your carbohydrates are depleted at night and you shouldn't exercise without fuel.

Q. I often feel nauseous/not hungry in the morning, and it's hard to make myself eat before practice. What should I do?

A. Lots of people don't feel like eating in the morning, and it can take time to get used to, but you can build up your ability to eat in the morning. Start with something small like a banana and slowly increase it. You should also experiment and find what works for you. Some people prefer liquids in the morning so they have smoothies. You can get all your food groups in a smoothie by adding things like tofu, which won't change the flavor. You also don't need to eat traditional breakfast foods, just have what sounds good to you.

When to eat

- It is good to have a snack right before training.
- Though you might hear that you should wait a long time after eating to exercise, you should actually be eating within 90 minutes before practice, and eat within 30 minutes after practice.
- This could be a bar, chocolate milk, turkey sandwich, trail mix, peanut butter banana sandwich, honey pistachios, etc.

Food Groups- these are the types of foods that you should have in every meal

1. Carbohydrates (grains and scratches): bread, beans, pasta
 2. Protein: Nuts, tofu, meat, eggs, cheese
 3. Fats & Oils: meat, nuts, avocado, coconut
- Though fat is often considered "unhealthy" it is vital for producing hormones and keeping us from getting injured.
4. "Color": fruits and vegetables

Q. How should athletes respond to other people who comment on their eating habits?

A. Your needs are different from everyone else's and they are also different from day to day. If you demand more from your body you need more food. To your body, fuel is fuel, so don't feel pressure to only eat salads or things that are considered "health foods". Nobody should be commenting on what you eat, but if they do, you can explain this to them, or you can just tell them not to ask you about it.

Other food notes:

- Variety is important.
- Food is to be enjoyed!
- Athletes need more fuel than non-athletic peers.
- Your body needs carbs, and high glycemic index carbs are great for training.
- Your weight changes every day and there are dozens of factors that affect it that have nothing to do with your health.

Hydration

- Being well hydrated is very important for runners.
- The easiest way to check if you are hydrated is to look at the color of your pee. It should be a pale lemonade color. If it is clear you could be over-hydrated, if it is dark yellow you are likely dehydrated.
- You don't have to just have water in your water bottle. You could have a sports drink, add electrolytes, or have fruit juice.

Sleep

- You need 9+ hours of sleep every night.
- It is helpful to sleep quality to eat right before bed.

Overtraining

- Overtraining will not help your running in the long-term.
- Listen to your body.
- Your body needs rests. This means taking regular rest days and resting between sport seasons.
- Find a good balance of training and resting.

Assessing your health

- Weight is a very irrelevant and unreliable way to measure your health, but there are many other ways to assess how healthy you are.
- The most simple way is to ask yourself if you feel good.
- Getting sick often or feeling tired every day can be signs that your health could be improved.
- When you are eating enough, your sleep will be better.