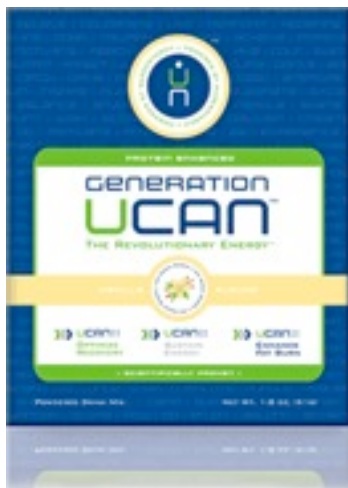


The Fueling Station

July 2010

Nutrition for Race Day



Race day nutrition requires a different nutrition strategy than normal daily nutrition...but not too much!

BOB'S CORNER

Welcome to the July edition of The Fueling Station!

With race season in full swing now, I thought I would take the time to discuss the ever evolving and somewhat confusing realm of race day nutrition.

There is definitely a change of guard when it comes to race day nutrition and especially when it comes to the quality of nutrition and nutrient timing.

Enjoy this month's The Fueling Station and here's to a great summer of racing!

Coach Bob

coachbob@fuel4mance.com

www.fuel4mance.com

Twitter: bobseebohar

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Race Day Nutrition

Bob Seebohar, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

There are two types of nutrition plans: daily nutrition and training/competition nutrition. While the emphasis of this article is not on daily nutrition, it is important to understand that proper nutrition throughout the day will support your training nutrition. What you put in your body throughout the day in meals and snacks will facilitate nutrient delivery to your muscles and the brain thus it should not go without mentioning the extreme importance of assisting you with your daily nutrition before determining their training/competition day nutrition plan.

Controlling blood sugar to maximize fat utilization and preserve carbohydrate stores is the first goal for daily nutrition to support training sessions. Through proper nutrition periodization and macronutrient shifting, you can teach their body to use more of its stored fat at higher intensities of exercise. This will reduce the reliance on supplemental carbohydrates needed during training or competition which will reduce the risk of gastrointestinal (GI) distress. This concept, termed metabolic efficiency, should be a goal for every athlete throughout the year in terms of their daily nutrition.

Once you have a good handle on your daily nutrition, it is time to navigate the waters of training and competition day nutrition. Of course, there will be many “it depends” when it comes to devising a competition day nutrition plan but there are some general recommendations that you can use when trying to decide what works and what doesn’t.

Before Competition

Contrary to what you may have heard from media, you should not significantly change your nutrition program prior to a competition. The concepts of nutrition periodization and metabolic efficiency become very important as GI safe and familiar foods should be your focal point without introducing anything new.

Of course, stress hormones will throw off the best laid race day nutrition plan sometimes in addition to other challenges. Below are some common of these common challenges that athletes face.

Fiber

For those athletes with sensitive stomachs before competition, I recommend tapering fiber intake down 2-3 days before competition. This means reducing the amount of high-fiber foods such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables for these few days. Reduce fiber intake by 25% each day. It is important to remember to implement a reverse fiber taper after their event. Just as you gradually decreased your fiber intake prior to their race, gradually increase your fiber back to normal levels in the 2-3 days following the race. Do this by increasing fiber consumption by 25% each day once again. It is also important to note that water needs will be increased when fiber is added back into the nutrition program so be sure to drink more fluids.

Race Day Nutrition (continued)

Bob Seebohar, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

Carbohydrates

I am asked quite often about carbohydrate loading the night or two before a race. In most cases, I am not a fan of this. The simple reason is because this completely alters a normal eating and metabolic efficiency plan. By introducing a large amount of carbohydrate and displacing protein and fat, blood sugar will be altered and energy levels will be all over the place—the last thing you want the day or two before the race. Stick with what has worked for you in the months leading up to the day of competition.

During Competition

In longer endurance events, consuming a bit of protein and fat can be beneficial but in shorter events, carbohydrate, fluid and electrolytes are the main constituents that should be in your nutrition plan. The term, “it depends”, will apply frequently when asking “what”, “how much” and “when” but the following general guidelines will help get you started:

Hydration

Consume about 3-8 ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes. Take larger drinks (gulps) because it increases emptying time from the stomach.

Carbohydrates

Current research indicates that some athletes may be able to absorb up to 90 grams of carbohydrate per hour. This is 360 calories and quite honestly, I prefer athletes follow the “less is more” approach for the simple reason of reducing the risk of GI distress.

Longer endurance events will lead to a large amount of calories being burned; however, the body is only able to consume between 10-35% of the energy expended (depending on the mode of activity). This is a generous estimate as most athletes can get nowhere near the high end and when they do, cramping and intestinal distress can easily develop. It is better to teach your body how to improve metabolic efficiency throughout the year rather than having to create a buffet style race day nutrition plan. This approach will fuel you more efficiently and will lead to a reduced need for refined carbohydrates that may cause stomach problems.

Electrolytes

Current research indicates that consuming 500-700 milligrams of sodium per liter of fluid should be adequate for athletes. However, in reality, I have found this to be far too low for endurance athletes. I recommend beginning at a minimum of 800 milligrams per hour and adjusting accordingly based on your sweat rate, sweat sodium concentration and environmental conditions. For athletes requiring a large amount of electrolytes, supplements will be needed. Look for one with a full electrolyte profile and at least 200 milligrams of sodium per serving.

Race Day Nutrition (continued)

Bob Seebohar, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

After Competition

Replacing the “fab 4” is important after a race. This includes fluid, sodium, carbohydrate and protein. It is important to consume these nutrients within 15-60 minutes of finishing to ensure a rapid nutritional recovery. Real foods can be easily used during this time remembering the “fab 4” concept. Simply choose a source of each and put them together. I have often used milk based fruit smoothies with a pinch of salt or low-fat chocolate milk and half of a lean meat sandwich in the post-workout window.

The recommended quantities for each of the “fab 4” include:

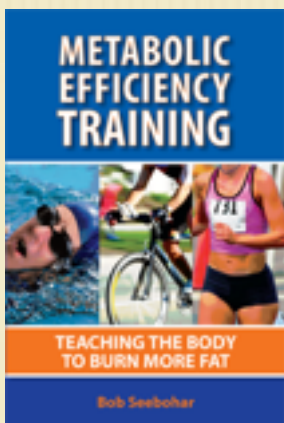
- 1.0-1.2 grams of carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight
- 24 ounces of fluid for every pound of body weight lost
- 10-20 grams of lean protein
- At least 500 milligrams of sodium

Of course, after competition eating does depend on how quickly you need to be ready for quality training again. What is important is that you return to your normal, metabolically efficient daily nutrition plan as soon as you can in order to continue making progress in utilizing more fat as energy and preserving carbohydrate stores for later use.

Have a great race season!

Coach Bob

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Coach Bob has been quite busy lately. Not only does he have his new book, “Metabolic Efficiency Training: Teaching the Body to Burn More Fat” but he also has a brand new DVD, “Strength Training for Triathletes” and a newly released E-book, “Neuromuscular, Dynamic and Functional Training for Athletes”. All of these were created to increase your knowledge about your body and how to take your health and performance to the next level.



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