

The Three Biggest Mistakes Endurance Athletes Make

1. They start their workout dehydrated.

Drinking well before your workout or race sets you up for optimal performance because doing so can prevent the onset of dehydration during exercise. Research has shown as well that the better your hydration levels going into a race or workout, the less muscle tissue (protein) breakdown during exercise. You don't want to use muscle tissue to fuel exercise. Hydrating well before exercise is a simple way of sparing protein or preventing its use as a fuel during training, benefiting both performance and recovery.

2. They fuel improperly prior to exercise.

Proper pre-exercise nutrition enhances athletic performance if you choose your food wisely, in the right amount for you, and leave enough time for digestion. Aim for about 50 to 75 grams of complex carbohydrates, like whole grains or fruit, per hour prior to exercise. Also keep the meal low in fiber and fat, and include some protein. Eat 2 to 3 hours before your workout or race, and take in only water in the last hour.

3. They don't begin re-fueling their bodies with adequate amounts of high-quality nutrients immediately after exercise.

Next to rest, the key to optimum recovery is diet, so replenishing carbohydrates and protein immediately after exercise is critical if you aspire to increase performance and remain injury-free. Within 30 minutes post-exercise is when your muscles are primed to receive nutrients that can maximize muscle glycogen (energy) and stimulate muscle repair. Your post-workout meal should be rich in carbohydrates and protein, and fat-free. A carbohydrate intake of 0.8 to 1.2 g/kg body weight and a protein intake of 0.2 to 0.4 g/kg body weight have been shown to speed up muscle carbohydrate replenishment and accelerate protein repair. This meal is best taken in liquid form as it will be absorbed more quickly than solid food.