

TRAINING GUIDE

Nutrition for Runners

Follow these winning strategies to help you eat and drink your way to a peak performance

Running requires a mindful approach to food, since everything we drink and eat has a direct impact on our performance and even our enjoyment of the sport: It's hard to love being a runner when you're bonking. So we compiled the best advice on how to fuel your runs—including the finest energy sources, smartest hydration strategies, ideal timing techniques, and weight-loss tips. Whether you're looking to uncork your performance potential or to shed those final five pounds, you'll find answers here.



Fuel Rules

Running keeps you fit. But to lose weight and run your best, focus on what you eat

1 EAT REAL FOOD

Convenience foods have their place: Energy chews during a run or a bottled smoothie afterward provide fast, nutritious fuel. But the bulk of a runner's diet should consist of whole foods. Fish, chicken, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, low-fat dairy, fruit—these healthy staples provide more nutritional value than highly processed options. Plus, preparing meals from real-food sources gives you more control over your sodium, fat, and calorie intake.

2 CHOOSE QUALITY CARBS

Because they fuel workouts and nourish spent muscles, carbs should be the backbone of a runner's diet. But some carbs deliver greater value than others. Make most of your carbs whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. And remember: The less processing a plant receives, the more nutritious it is (think potatoes, not potato chips).

3 WRITE IT DOWN

Write down everything you eat and drink for several days to evaluate your eating habits. Are you snacking more than you realize? Reaching for sweets too often? Keep a ledger to identify areas where there's room for improvement.

4 INDULGE ON OCCASION

Allow yourself the occasional dessert or cocktail to satisfy cravings and keep those urges from becoming binges. Just keep an eye on portions and frequency.

5 DRINK DELIBERATELY

Fluids are an essential part of any runner's fueling plan: By staying hydrated, you'll boost performance and minimize nuisances like GI distress. But watch the calories: Drinks that are high in sugar can contribute to weight gain. Limit fruit juice, pass on soft drinks, and switch your morning mocha to a cup of tea or coffee.

MORE INSIDE





Smart Substitutes

Lose weight while boosting nutrition with these simple swaps

SWAP IN Olive-oil dressing SWAP OUT Creamy dressing

Having vinaigrette instead of ranch over salads saves 90 calories per two-tablespoon serving. Choose reduced-fat options, and save 120 calories.

SWAP IN Organic fat-free milk SWAP OUT 2% milk

Go fat-free to save 30 calories and four grams of fat. Organic milk spares you from ingesting trace amounts of chemicals and hormones.

SWAP IN Club soda with fruit juice SWAP OUT Sugary fruit drinks

Pass on “juicy” soft drinks and brew your own: Diluting 100-percent juice with sparkling water cuts calories (50 calories or more per serving, compared with juice) yet still provides potent doses of recovery-boosting antioxidants. Cranberry and pomegranate contain anthocyanidins, which are powerful cancer fighters; orange juice delivers immunity-boosting vitamin C. In addition to being nutritious, this drink tastes great!

SWAP IN Whole-grain bread SWAP OUT White bread

Whole-grain bread has more protein, B vitamins, antioxidants, and fiber (three to four grams per one-ounce slice) than white.

SWAP IN Omega-3 eggs SWAP OUT Standard eggs

All eggs are good sources of protein, but the ones enhanced with omega-3 fatty acids boost immunity, quiet inflammation, and protect against diseases such as Alzheimer's and cancer.

SWAP IN Dark beer SWAP OUT Light beer

Indulge by downing a stout or porter instead of lighter, amber ales: These dark beers contain a few more calories per bottle, but they also have far more antioxidants from the wheat and other grains used to make them.

SWAP IN Roasted chicken SWAP OUT Deli meats

Processed deli meats are loaded with sodium, while salami and pastrami are also high in fat. Trim back on both by buying a whole roasted chicken or turkey breast (without the skin) from the deli counter and slicing it yourself for healthier sandwiches.

SWAP IN Part-skim mozzarella or feta SWAP OUT Brie and cheddar

Part-skim mozzarella and feta contain 30 fewer calories per ounce than Brie and cheddar, which are higher in saturated fat.

SWAP IN Radishes, peppers, snow peas SWAP OUT Celery

Snacking on a broader spectrum of raw veggies can boost health with nutrients such as vitamins A and C (from bell peppers), potassium (from snow peas), and folate (from radishes).

SWAP IN Low-carb tortillas SWAP OUT White-flour tortillas

Get more for less by choosing a 90-calorie low-carb tortilla (which delivers eight grams of fiber) instead of the 150-calorie white-flour tortilla, which has zero fiber.

SWAP IN Baby greens SWAP OUT Iceberg lettuce

Iceberg offers little benefit beyond crunch, but baby greens—spinach, arugula, chard, romaine, radicchio, and beet greens—are rich in carotenes and other phytochemicals that promote muscle repair and ward off colds.

RUNNER'S PANTRY

Stock up on these essentials to ensure an at-the-ready supply of run-fueling foods

✓ GRAINS

Sure, pasta's a grain—but it's highly processed, so round it out with unrefined grains such as bulgur, which cooks fast and makes great salads and breakfast cereal. Brown and wild rice provide variety and fiber. Try quinoa, one of the few sources of complete protein. And don't overlook oats.

✓ OLIVE OIL

Choose extra-virgin, which is less processed than other types. Its monounsaturated fat has been shown to lower "bad" cholesterol and improve heart health. Drizzle it over salads, potatoes, pasta.

✓ BEANS

Beans are cheap, low in fat, and high in protein, iron, and fiber. Eat beans as side dishes, add them to salads, and stir them into pasta sauces (where they make a healthy alternative to meat).

✓ FRESH HERBS

They elevate other healthy foods from so-so to sensational. Mint freshens up salads, potatoes, even beverages. Basil enhances beans and tomatoes. Rub rosemary into chicken or salmon.

✓ EGGS

Packed with protein, eggs are inexpensive—and stay fresh for weeks.

✓ LONG-KEEPING VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Carrots, kale, zucchini, and lemons keep for a week or more; potatoes, onions, and garlic last even longer. Buy frozen spinach and corn to enjoy these fast-fading veggies anytime.

✓ CANNED TOMATOES

Indispensable for making superfast sauces for pasta or chicken.

✓ DRIED FRUIT AND NUTS

Having these healthy snacks on hand keeps you from overeating at meals. They also make tasty add-ins for salads and grain-based side dishes.



Eat This Now

Eat seasonally for maximum flavor and nutritional value

FOOD	SEASON	WHAT YOU GET
Rhubarb	March–June	Vitamins C and K. A 26-calorie serving (one cup) also delivers minerals such as calcium, potassium, and manganese, which helps turn protein and carbohydrates into energy.
Pineapple	March–June	Immunity-boosting antioxidants. Get your Daily Value of vitamin C in just one cup, along with bromelain—an enzyme that fights inflammation, aids digestion, and reduces swelling.
Arugula	April–October	Bone-strengthening nutrients. One cup contains 28 percent of your Daily Value for vitamin K, plus calcium and folate.
Asparagus	April–early June	B vitamins. One cup provides 65 percent of your Daily Value for folate, a B vitamin that promotes healthy blood cells.
Wild Salmon	May–September	Inflammation-quashing protein. Catch wild coho, sockeye, and salmon for environmentally friendly fish rich in omega-3s.
Tart Cherries	Late June–August	Natural painkillers. Runners who drank tart cherry juice twice daily for a week before and during the 197-mile Hood to Coast Relay reported feeling less pain than placebo drinkers.
Beets	June–September	More stamina. A 2009 study found that cyclists who drank 500 milliliters of beet juice exercised 16 percent longer than those who drank a placebo.
Apples	September–October	Improved endurance. Apples are among the best food sources of quercetin, an antioxidant that can boost endurance.
Pumpkin Seeds	September–November	Muscle-fueling minerals. Rich in magnesium and iron, protein, vitamin K, and heart-healthy mono- and polyunsaturated fats—all for less than 200 calories per half-cup.
Spaghetti Squash	September–November	A nutritious noodle. One cup contains 42 calories and two grams of fiber; it's also a good source of vitamin B ₆ , vitamin C, manganese, potassium, and iron.



How Much Do I Need?

Your calorie needs vary by body weight and activity level. Here's how to estimate what's right for you

1 → Multiply your goal weight by 10.

2 → Add to that: 20 percent of that number if you're a desk jockey; 50 percent if you're moderately active; 70 percent if you're moving all day.

3 → Add the calories burned during your workouts.

4 → Reduce the total by 15 percent.

5 → The final figure = the number of calories you should consume daily to achieve or maintain your goal weight while maintaining enough energy for exercise and your daily activities.

CALORIES BURNED	130 POUNDS	160 POUNDS	190 POUNDS
12 min/mile	472 cal/hour	582 cal/hour	691 cal/hour
11 min/mile	532 cal/hour	655 cal/hour	734 cal/hour
10 min/mile	591 cal/hour	727 cal/hour	864 cal/hour
9 min/mile	650 cal/hour	800 cal/hour	950 cal/hour
8 min/mile	709 cal/hour	873 cal/hour	1036 cal/hour
7 min/mile	827 cal/hour	1018 cal/hour	1209 cal/hour
6 min/mile	945 cal/hour	1163 cal/hour	1382 cal/hour

MEASURE UP

Estimate portion size—without using a scale—by using your own yardsticks



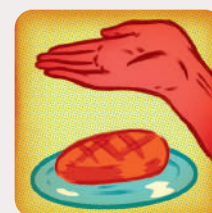
ONE CLOSED FIST → One cup of beverage



ONE CUPPED HAND → A half-cup of pasta, rice, cut fruit, berries, or beans; one ounce of nuts



TWO CUPPED HANDS → One cup of flaky breakfast cereal, soup, chili, curry; one ounce of chips or pretzels



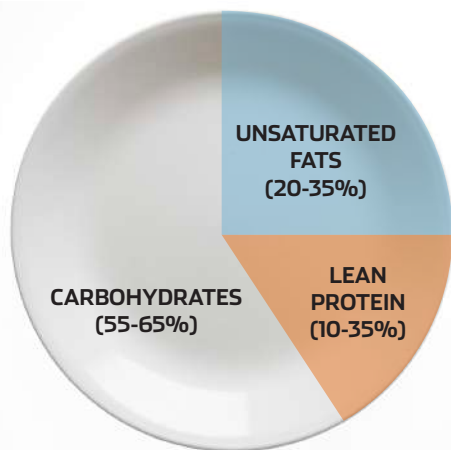
PALM OF THE HAND → Three ounces of cooked meat, fish, or canned tuna



ONE THUMB → One ounce of cheese



TWO THUMBS TOGETHER → One tablespoon of condiments such as peanut butter, salad dressing, guacamole, or mayonnaise



A RUNNER'S PLATE

To make sure each meal delivers the nutrients you need, give key food groups their place on your plate

CARBOHYDRATES (55-65%) → Such as fruits, whole-grain breads, pasta, and vegetables

UNSATURATED FATS (20-35%) → Such as olive oil, walnuts, and avocados

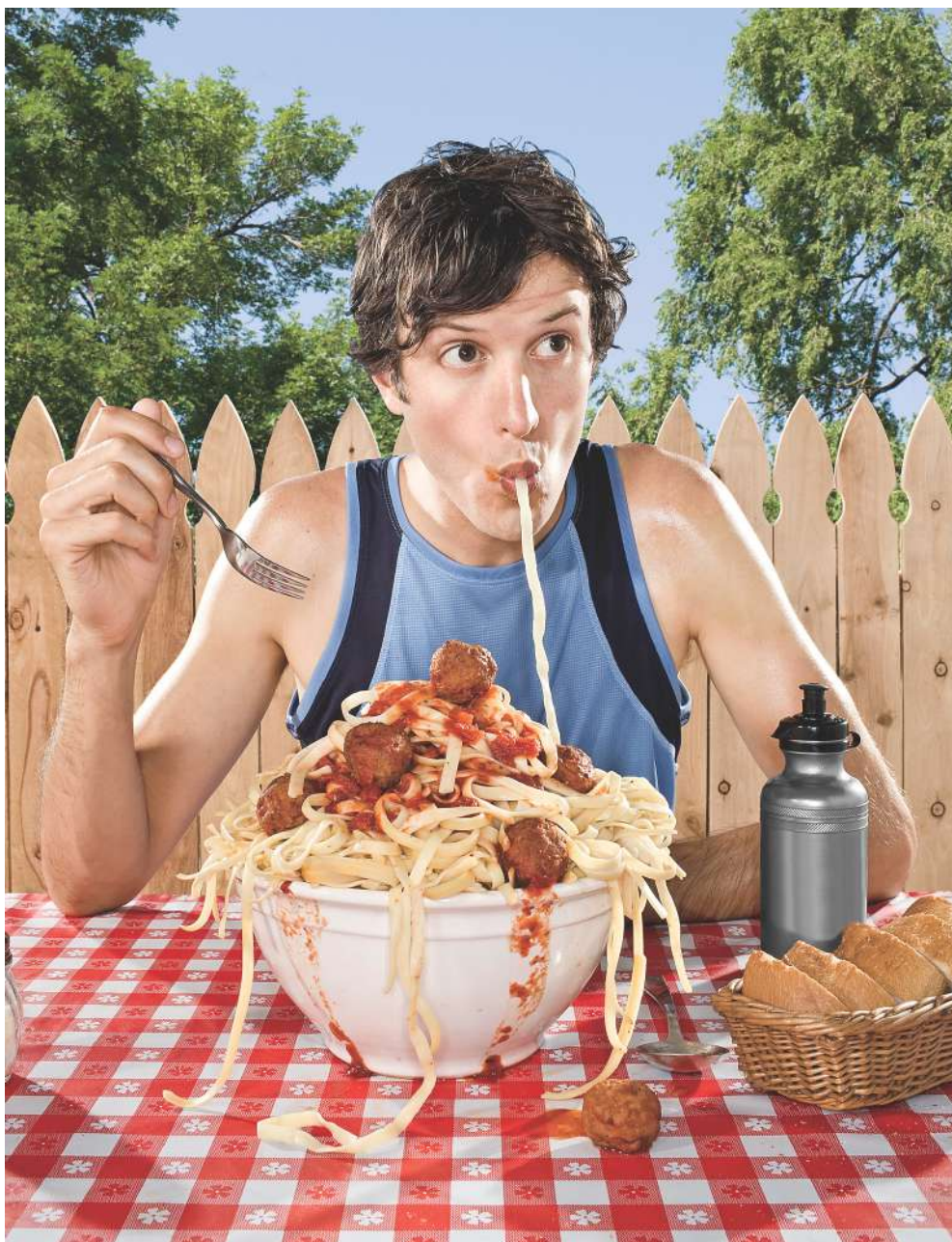
LEAN PROTEIN (10-35%) → Such as chicken, sirloin, tofu, nuts, and seeds

COUNT YOUR CARBS

You know that 55 to 65 percent of your daily calories should come from carbs. If you're running 25 miles a week, that's about 2.25 grams of carbohydrate for each pound of body weight: A 150-pound runner requires 340 grams a day. Running higher mileage? Increase your intake to 3.5 grams of carbs for each pound you weigh.

SLOW VS. FAST CARBS

High-fiber carbohydrates (such as oatmeal, fruit, and vegetables) are slowly digested, so they deliver long-lasting energy. Slow carbs should be the basis of your diet. But right before or after your run, reach for fast carbs (such as pasta, white rice, and potatoes): These low-fiber fuels are quickly digested to provide a fast energy hit.



Carbo-Loading

Going overboard in the days before your event can ruin your big day. Here's how to handle prerace nutrition

THE MYTH → Bingeing on carbs before a race maxes out muscle glycogen, which sustains endurance for distance events like marathons.

THE TRUTH → Flooding your system with more carbs than it can handle will leave you feeling bloated and increase the likelihood of unplanned porta-potty stops.

THE STRATEGY → You don't need to gorge yourself on extra calories; simply shift more of your total calories toward carbs (about 60 to 65 percent) in the weeks before your marathon or half-marathon, while reducing your mileage. You'll effectively boost your glycogen stores without incurring those unwanted negative side effects.



What's Your Type?

When to eat depends on when you run. Here's how to schedule your meals

MORNING RUNNER

You run from 6:30 to 7:30 a.m.

Meal planner:

6 A.M. → Down a snack, such as a glass of juice

8 A.M. → Time for breakfast.

Don't skimp: Aim for 30 percent of your daily calorie intake at this meal, and balance carbs with protein.

12 P.M. → Lunch

4 P.M. → Snack

8 P.M. → Dinner

5 P.M. → Small snack

8 P.M. → Dinner

EVENING RUNNER

You run from 6 to 7 p.m.

Meal planner:

7 A.M. → Breakfast

11 A.M. → Early lunch that's rich in carbs

3 P.M. → Late lunch

5 P.M. → Light snack

8 P.M. → Protein-rich dinner

LUNCHTIME RUNNER

You run from noon to 1 p.m.

Meal planner:

7 A.M. → Carb-rich breakfast of fruit with oatmeal or whole-grain bagel

10 A.M. → Snack: Eat a 200-calorie yogurt or energy bar

1:30 P.M. → Protein-rich lunch

RACE-DAY RUNNER

You race (or do your long run) at 11 a.m.

Meal planner:

8 A.M. → Breakfast

10 A.M. → Snack

12:30 P.M. → Hearty snack

2 P.M. → Lunch

5 P.M. → Snack

8 P.M. → Dinner

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

To get the most from your workouts, use these fueling strategies before, during, and after your run

	HYDRATION	CALORIE NEEDS	SUGGESTED FOODS
PRE Short Run (60 minutes or less)	Drink 8 to 16 ounces of water one hour before run	Eat 200 calories of low-fiber carbs 30 to 60 minutes before run	Low-fiber cereal with skim milk; pretzels; fig cookies; sports drinks or energy bars
PRE Long Run (60 minutes or more)	Drink 8 to 16 ounces of sports drink that contains carbs and electrolytes one hour before run	Eat 350 to 550 calories of low-fiber, low-fat carbs 90 to 120 minutes before run	See above; also bagel with jam
DURING Run	Drink 3 to 6 ounces of water (or sports drink, if running more than 60 minutes) every 15 to 20 minutes	Take in carbs every 20 minutes, for a total of 45 to 60 grams	Gels; Clif Bloks; Powerade; Accelerade; GU
POST Short Run	Drink 8 to 24 ounces of water (more in high temperatures) within 60 minutes	Eat a small snack of 4:1 ratio of carbs to protein, within 15 minutes of run	Low-fat chocolate milk; energy bar; pretzels and peanut butter
POST Long Run	Drink 8 to 24 ounces of water (more in high temps, when sports drink should also be added in)	Eat a small snack of 4:1 ratio of carbs to protein within 15 minutes of run. Then, within 2 hours after run, eat a meal	See above; also ham sandwiches; fruit smoothies with added protein

RUNNER'S DIGEST

Diagnose—and treat—common GI troubles

Excessive gas and bloating

Too much fiber: Intestinal bacteria produces gas as it breaks down fibrous carbs.

THE FIX → A full day before a race, skip high-fiber foods, such as beans, whole grains, broccoli, and bell peppers.

Excessive gas, bloating, and occasional diarrhea

Lactose intolerance may be to blame.

THE FIX → Eliminate dairy from your diet, or eat only yogurt or kefir. Take Lactaid or other enzyme pills to help your body digest dairy.

Sharp stomach pain; burping while running

Swallowing air (from chewing gum or carbonated beverages) can cause burping and chest pains.

THE FIX → Eat slowly, and when nervous, take deep, relaxed breaths.

A burning in the chest while running

Exercise can shoot stomach acid into the esophagus, resulting in heartburn, acid reflux, and GERD (gastroesophageal disease).

THE FIX → Eat many smaller meals in place of one large one; wait three hours after eating to run. Avoid triggers like coffee and spicy food.





Sudden midrun bathroom urges

The GI tract gets less blood midrun, causing a condition known as "runner's trots."

THE FIX → Pass on coffee, which stimulates intestinal elimination. Stay hydrated. Limit midrun carbs to 30 to 60 grams per hour.

Get Back on Track

So you've sabotaged your healthy habits with a splurge? Fix common diet disasters with these next-day remedies

THE DOWNFALL	FOOD FIX	RUNNING REPAIR
The Dessert Binge 	<p>One sweet splurge often leads to another, because sugar unleashes the "feel-good" hormone serotonin: As those levels dip, you crave another sugar hit. Don't quit cold turkey. Instead, wean yourself off the sugar addiction by eating healthy sweets (such as fresh fruit, all-fruit jams, and smoothies).</p>	<p>Run intervals to burn off those empty calories. Do six to eight 30-second repeats at 90 percent of your top speed; bookend your speed-work with two-minute recovery jogs. You'll burn about 700 calories—equivalent to a slice of pecan pie.</p>
The Roman Feast 	<p>Celebratory dinners stuff a day's worth of calories into one meal—yet leave you ravenous the next morning. Don't let guilt keep you from eating breakfast (skipping meals creates an unhealthy binge/starve cycle). Instead, reboot your system with 300 to 400 calories' worth of complex carbs, low-fat dairy, and fruit (such as yogurt and granola with berries).</p>	<p>After chowing down on carbs, your glycogen stores are primed for a long run. Head out for as long as possible—one hour, minimum—running at a slow pace so you can maximize mileage. You'll torch 800 or so calories—enough to work off last night's prime rib.</p>
The Cocktail Crisis 	<p>Downing drinks and appetizers quickly adds up to a meal's worth of calories—but without a meal's satiety factor. Stop grazing, and plan out three square meals that include a 300-calorie breakfast and a 900-calorie dinner. At each, fill half your plate with fruit and vegetables, a quarter with lean protein, and the rest with whole grains.</p>	<p>Last night's fat and alcohol consumption don't prime your muscles for major exertion, so don't force yourself through a run. Instead, rebound with restorative movement (such as walking, swimming, or yoga). By day two, up the intensity with an interval workout: After a two-mile warmup, do five two-minute intervals at a medium-hard effort with a one-minute recovery jog in between and a two-mile cooldown. That'll work off 700 calories.</p>
The Too-Big Buffet 	<p>Buffet items emphasize fatty meats and starches (vegetables, when represented, are often bathed in butter). Restore balance by going vegetarian for a day. Load your plate with veggies, whole grains, and lean proteins such as tofu or fish. The antioxidants help combat yesterday's flood of fat and sodium, and the lighter fare restores energy levels.</p>	<p>Burn calories and amp up your metabolism with a tempo run/weight-training combo. Start with a four-mile tempo run at about 80 percent effort; sandwich that between two-mile jogs. Then, complete a circuit in the weight room, working all major muscle groups to fatigue. Your reward? About 1,000 calories of damage control.</p>

The Drink Menu

Does your running call for water, or something stronger? Here's how to choose the best beverage

	WHAT IT IS	WHEN IT'S RIGHT
Water	Tap or bottled, water provides calorie-free hydration—a boon for those watching their weight.	On runs 30 minutes and shorter, since your stored energy can meet the workout's demands. It's best for anytime hydration: Drink water during and between meals to replace fluid lost during workouts.
Enhanced Water	These low-calorie drinks often contain a trace of sweetener, vitamins and minerals—but not enough to boost running performance.	When plain water seems boring.
Sports Drinks	Their low carbohydrate concentration (six to eight percent, or 14 to 20 grams of carbs per serving) replenish spent stores 30 percent faster than with plain water. They also contain sodium and potassium, electrolytes that are lost through sweat and important for fluid retention.	Before, during, and after runs longer than 30 minutes. Don't balk at the calories: Research indicates that consuming carbs during exercise may suppress appetite later.
Endurance Sports Drinks	These formulas have the same amount of carbs as regular sports drinks, but boast an extra dose of electrolytes such as potassium (and twice the sodium of sports brews).	Best for distance runners: Drink these during workouts or races lasting two hours or more. Also good for runners who sweat a lot or tend to cramp during long runs.
Energy Drinks	Caffeine and sugar provide the advertised "energy." Containing 110 to 160 sugar calories per eight-ounce serving, their dense carb content slows fluid absorption and can cause stomach upset. Other stimulants (such as guarana, ginseng, and taurine) may increase blood pressure and make you feel shaky, especially on an empty stomach.	For supplemental fluids and carbs before and after a run, and when calories aren't a concern.
Recovery Drinks	These potions combine carbs with protein, which facilitates muscle repair and improves the body's ability to replenish its glycogen stores. Most contain 30 to 60 grams of carbs and seven to 15 grams of protein (for a four-to-one ratio).	After a race or tough workout, especially when the exertion makes solid foods unappetizing.
Juice and Soft Drinks	They'll hydrate you, but their dense carb concentration (10 to 14 percent) slows fluid absorption in the intestines and can cause stomach distress in some runners when sipped during exercise. 100 percent real fruit juices contain vitamins; soda delivers no nutritional value.	At snack time, or before a run.



THE SWEAT TEST

To gauge how much you should drink, estimate how much you lose. Take this test in different conditions and adjust your intake

- GET NAKED** → Right before a run, weigh yourself nude.
- GO HARD** → Run at race pace for one hour, keeping track of how many ounces you drink.
- GET NAKED** → After the run, undress, towel off, and weigh yourself nude again.
- CALCULATE LOSS** → Subtract your postrun weight from your prerun weight, and convert to ounces. Add the number of ounces you consumed during your run to get your hourly fluid loss.
- CALCULATE NEED** → Divide that number by four to know how much to drink every 15 minutes (in the above example, it would be eight ounces).

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Drink too much water, and you run the risk of hyponatremia—low blood-sodium levels that cause headache, muscle spasms, and in rare cases seizure and death. Prevent it by drinking according to your needs (see "The Sweat Test," above). During runs longer than 30 minutes, sip sports drink to replace the sodium and other electrolytes you lose through sweat.



Best Bottles

Due to recent warnings, many runners are wondering if our plastic water bottles belong in the recycling bin

MANY RUNNERS HYDRATE by carrying their own bottles. But some plastic bottles may not be safe: Bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical in polycarbonate bottles, has been linked to cancer, reproductive issues, and endocrine damage in animals. The FDA says polycarbonate bottles are safe, and a panel from the National Insti-

tutes of Health concluded that there is only “negligible concern” regarding BPA’s effects on adults. But runners who prefer to avoid BPA altogether can drink from bottles made of stainless steel, BPA-free plastic (check the label), or soft polyethylene (which doesn’t contain BPA, but should be hand-washed and rinsed out regularly to avoid degrading the plastic).

DRINK ON YOUR FEET

Here’s how to negotiate water stations on race day

1 SCOPE THEM OUT

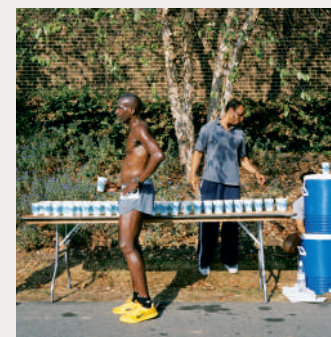
Check race details ahead of time to know how far apart water stations will be. Plan your stops accordingly: Most runners need two to four ounces every 15 to 20 minutes.

2 PICK YOUR DRINK

Find out what type of fluid is offered at the race. You’ll need 30 to 60 grams of carbs every hour, so if you’re not getting them through gels or chews, grab a sports drink (an eight-ounce cup contains about 15 grams of carbs).

3 MAKE A SPOUT

To keep from gagging on a wave of water, pinch the rim of the cup closed and sip from one end.



SMART SIPPING

No matter what you drink, chill it: Research shows that drinking cold beverages before and during exercise boosts endurance. Sip often: Frequent, small amounts hydrate you more effectively than occasional, massive gulps. Drink early: eight to 16 ounces one to two hours before a run to ensure you start your run hydrated.

Top Ways To Lose Weight

Try these runners' diet strategies to shed pounds while you're in training

DITCH DIET FOODS → They may seem like a bargain, calorie-wise, but most diet foods are too low in carbs, fiber, or protein to keep you satisfied. The result? You eat more of other foods than you normally would. Opt for real foods, but limit portions.

GET YOUR Z'S → Research suggests that people who skimp on sleep eat more snacks and weigh more than those who are well-rested. Without enough sleep, your energy levels, immune system, and mood all take a hit. Power down earlier at night so you can run feeling supercharged.

EAT COLORFULLY → Pale foods (such as pasta and potatoes) have their place on runners' plates, but a rainbow-hued diet includes berries, carrots, broccoli, tomatoes—fruits and vegetables that are low in calories but high in run-fueling nutrients.



BUILD MUSCLE → Even at rest, muscle uses oxygen and thus burns calories, so add strength training to your weekly regimen.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF → The more routine your running becomes, the fewer calories you'll burn. Bust out of the rut by boosting your intensity and doing different types of workouts

(like a weekly long run or a day of cross-training) to challenge your body and burn more calories.

EMBRACE FATS → Fat keeps you satisfied and prevents your blood sugar from plummeting, which keeps you from overeating later in the day. Choose unsaturated fats to help lower LDL and reduce your risk of heart disease: Some research suggests that a diet rich in monounsaturated fats can also help prevent weight gain.

CONTROL EMOTIONAL EATING → Reaching for the cookie jar when you're feeling blue puts on unwanted pounds. Learn to separate comfort cravings from genuine hunger: If a healthy food choice doesn't satisfy your urge, you're seeking mood-lifters, not fuel.

GET A SCALE → People who weigh themselves daily or weekly lose more weight (and keep it off) than dieters who rarely step on a scale.

GO SLOW → Slashing calories and working out like a machine gets old, fast—and once you abandon the too-ambitious routine, it's easy to regain any weight you lost. Set modest goals—like slashing 300 calories per day—that require small changes, not whole-life overhauls.

EAT BREAKFAST → Within two hours of waking, eat a breakfast that includes carbohydrates (for energy) and protein (for satiety). That way, you'll be less susceptible to a midmorning doughnut indulgence.

LOSE FIVE POUNDS IN FOUR WEEKS

It takes a 3,500-calorie deficit to drop one pound; peeling off five pounds requires a net loss of 17,500 calories. Here's how to make it happen

ROUTINE CHANGES	CALORIE DEFICIT PER WEEK*
Swap out two days of regular running for two days of speedwork	440
Add three miles to your weekly total	300
Cut 400 calories from your daily intake	2,800
Add one weekly cross-training session on a day when you don't run	500
Add one weekly strength-training session on a day when you don't run	400
TOTAL	4,440 (17,760/MONTH)

* Estimate based on a 150-pound person who runs 15 to 20 miles per week over four days, running a nine-minute-per-mile pace.

With contributions by Liz Applegate, Christie Aschwanden, Karen Asp, Kelly Bastone, Mark Bittman, Sarah Bowen Shea, Nancy Clark, Matt Fitzgerald, Leslie Goldman, John Hanc, Ben Hewitt, Peter Jaret, Matthew Kadey, Yishane Lee, Sarah Lorge Butler, Dimity McDowell, Pam Nisevich Bede, Liz Plosser, Jen Van Allen, Sally Wadyka, Kristen Wolfe Bieler