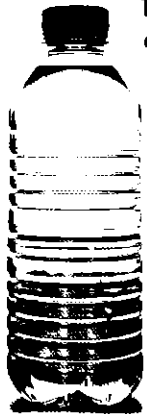


9 WAYS TO TRAIN YOUR GUT TO AVOID BATHROOM BREAKS PLAYERS NEED TO EAT PROPERLY BEFORE COMPETITION

Football players need to fuel wisely in order to perform optimally. While some athletes train their bodies to rely on fat for fuel because fat is less likely to cause stomach issues, training the gut is a far easier alternative for most of us.

BY NANCY CLARK, SPORTS NUTRITIONIST



THE FOLLOWING TIPS CAN HELP PLAYERS exercise with digestive peace.

DRINK ENOUGH FLUIDS. Dehydration triggers intestinal problems. If you are a "big guy" who sweats heavily, this can be a lot of fluid. For example, a 200-pound football player could easily lose 4 pounds (a half-gallon) of sweat in an hour of exercise. He needs to train his gut to handle fluid replacement during training. He could need as much as 12 to 16 ounces every 15 minutes during a two-hour practice.

DON'T EAT TOO CLOSE TO PRACTICE/GAME. Feeling "full" and "bloating" during exercise indicates fluids (and foods) have not emptied from the stomach. This commonly happens during really hard exercise, when reduced blood flow to the stomach delays stomach emptying. Hot weather and prolonged exercise in the heat can also reduce stomach emptying.

DILUTE HIGHLY CONCENTRATED CARBS (i.e., sports drinks, gels). Be sure to drink enough water during exercise (i.e. 16 ounces of water per

100 calories gel). This will help speed up gastric emptying.

FORM A ROUTINE. If you plan to eat peanut butter on a bagel before you compete, you'll want to eat that routinely before important training sessions. This helps train your gut to accommodate fat (sustained energy) as well as carbs (quick energy).

MIX FIBER WITH CARBS. Once a carbohydrate (such as sport drink, gel, banana, or gummy bears) empties from the stomach, it enters the small intestine and is broken down into one of three simple sugars (glucose, fructose, galactose).

These sugars need "taxi cabs" to get transported out of the intestine and into the bloodstream.



DON'T CHANGE YOUR DIET IN-SEASON. If you typically avoid breads and pasta, don't decide to fuel with carb-rich gels and sports drinks. Your body won't have the capacity to optimally transport the sugar (carbs) out of your intestines and to your muscles.

VARIETY IS BEST. When planning what to eat during extended exercise, choose from a variety of carbs with a variety of sugars (i.e., sport drink, gum drops, and maple sugar candy).



This helps prevent the glucose transporters from getting saturated. Too much of one kind of sport food can easily create GI problems.

EAT NATURAL FOODS. "Real foods" such as bananas, raisins and cereal, have been shown to be as effective as commercial sport foods. Your body processes "real food" every day and has developed a good supply of transporters to deal with the carbohydrate you commonly eat.

By experimenting and learning what works best for your body, you can fuel without anxiety about undesired pit stops.



FUEL FOR ENDURANCE. For exercise that lasts for up to two hours, research suggests about 60 grams (240 calories) of carb per hour can empty from the small intestine and get into the bloodstream. Hence, that's a good target. For longer, slower, events, the body can use 90 grams (360 calories) carb per hour from multiple sources, as tolerated.

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6 RULES OF TRAINING

- 1 Train with relatively large volumes of fluid to get your stomach used to that volume.
- 2 Routinely eat carbohydrate-based foods before training sessions to increase your body's ability to absorb and use the carbs.
- 3 During training, practice your race-day fueling. Mimic what you might eat before the actual competitive event, and tweak it until you find the right balance.
- 4 If you are concerned about diarrhea, in addition to preventing dehydration, limit your fiber intake for a few days pre-event (fewer whole grains, fruits and veggies).
- 5 Reducing your intake of onions, garlic, broccoli, apples, and sorbitol might help reduce GI issues during exercise.
- 6 Meet with a sports dietitian to help you create a fueling plan that promotes intestinal peace and better performance.



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