

Some Guidelines for Good Nutrition for Cross Country

We are what we eat! We put a great amount of energy and effort into our training. We need to look at our diet as well. Below are some guidelines for healthy nutrition. They are simply guidelines. Feel free to modify them to ensure that they work for you.

Rule One: *Be consistent!*

None of these guidelines is a magic bullet or crash course. Don't introduce new things into your routine all at once. Make small changes and keep your experiments under control. Most of all, don't try anything new on race day (or the day before)!

Rule Two: *Drink more water.*

Drink at least one big (16 ounce) glass of water in the morning, with every meal, and in the evening. Drink water before running (up to 30 minutes) workouts or races, and after every run.

Rule Three: *Eat a good breakfast. Everyday.*

Get into the habit of eating a balanced breakfast which includes high quality complex-carbohydrate foods (cereal, bagels, toast, etc) and fruit. You should also have an early lunch at school, avoiding fatty and greasy foods.

Rule Four: *Eat more raw fruits and vegetables.*

Fruits and vegetables help you meet your daily carbohydrate need. Green vegetables are especially nutrient rich. Generally, the darker in color, the better it will be for you.

Rule Five: *Eliminate carbonated sodas.*

A can of soda can contain as much as eleven teaspoons of sugar and large amounts of caffeine.

You should especially try to decrease the amount of artificial sweeteners in your diet.

Artificial sweeteners like Saccharin, Nutrasweet (often found in diet sodas) should not be a regular part of your diet.

Rule Six: *Limit caffeine intake.*

Caffeine and other stimulants rev up your nervous system and can cause dehydration.

Rule Seven: *Limit salt intake.*

Most of the salt we need each day is in the food we eat. Try to avoid adding salt to your food.

Rule Eight: *Eat fewer highly sweetened foods.*

Added refined sugars, like sucrose (table sugar), can cause your body to produce too much insulin, which can cause low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and leave you feeling weak.

Rule Nine: *Limit red meat in your diet.*

Most Americans eat far more red meat than necessary to be healthy. Red meat in moderation is healthy, but too much can be an important cause of elevated fat intake.

Rule Ten: *Put that fuel to good use.*

Eat right. Sleep well. Drink lots of water. Run fast.

Special thanks to Dr.'s John Snyder and Lane Bower at UCSF; and Mr Tony Calvello and Ms. Marla Bottner at St. Ignatius.

Some Guidelines for Good Nutrition for Cross Country

The three to four days before a race are critical for achieving success. Good pre-race nutrition can dramatically delay fatigue and make sure that you race your best.

A high level performance can be maintained if you give your body **48 to 72 hours to properly hydrate and fuel.**

Glycogen is a form of sugar stored in the muscles and liver. It is the main source of energy in high intensity sports. The ability to produce speed and power over time depends in part on how much glycogen is available to your muscles. The most important factor in a pre-race meal is to eat enough complex carbohydrates (not refined sugars) to refill your muscle and liver stores. Water is a critical factor in glycogen storage. Your body needs water to store glycogen.

Starting two nights before your race, your meals should be high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat (about one-third protein and two-thirds carbohydrates). You should drink at least 16 ounces of water with each meal. Waiting until the night before is too late!

On race day, you should eat at least 3-4 hours before your race, with a light snack (high in complex carbohydrates) about 90 minutes before you run. You should be drinking water throughout this period.

Foods that are high in good (complex) carbohydrates:

- Multi-grain cereals,
- whole grain cereals and breads,
- fresh or dried fruit,
- low-fat yogurt,
- bagels,
- pasta,
- beans,
- fruit bars,
- pretzels,
- vegetables,
- rice,
- waffles,
- pancakes,
- potatoes, sweet potatoes,
- non-fat milk.

Special thanks to Dr.'s John Snyder and Lane Bower at UCSF; and Mr Tony Calvello and Ms. Marla Bottner at St. Ignatius.