

## How Much Should a Triathlete Eat?

One of the most common questions I get from endurance athletes is how much should they be eating to support their training and have enough energy to do well. As a result, I have written this article to provide you information about how much you (as an endurance athlete) should eat each day with one goal in mind: to improve athletic performance. I will address race nutrition and recover nutrition in future articles.

The predominant energy system for endurance athletes is aerobic with brief, intermittent involvement of anaerobic energy systems. Actual energy expenditure depends on the intensity, duration and type of activity. Exercise intensities may range between 50-90% VO<sub>2</sub> max for events lasting up to 17 hours, with the total energy expenditure ranging between a couple of hundred calories to tens of thousands of calories per day.

The stress of triathlon training can decrease appetite, resulting in reduced consumption of calories and carbohydrates. Inadequate energy and carbohydrate intake can lead to chronic fatigue, weight loss and impaired performance. \

Overall, the following are daily dietary recommendations for triathletes

- **Carbohydrates:** 1-10 grams per kilogram (kg) of body weight (more for longer days and vice-versa)
- **Protein:** 1.2 – 1.6 grams per kg of body weight per day
- **Fat:** 1 gram per kg of body weight per day
- **Fluid:** a minimum of 10-12 cups of water per day

*Example:* If you weigh 160 lbs (72.7 kg), you would need the following:

- Carbohydrates: 509 – 727 grams (2036 – 2098 calories)
- Protein: 87-116 grams (348 – 464 calories)
- Fat: 73 grams (657 calories)

**Total calories: 3041-4029**

### Conversions:

- **1 gram of carbohydrate = 4 calories**
- **1 gram of protein = 4 calories**
- **1 gram of fat = 9 calories**
- **kilogram = 2.2 pounds**

Of course, these numbers are strictly guidelines as each athlete is

Different and requires different types of nutrition. Keep in mind the following before putting together your training diet:

- In what training cycle are you?
- How many hours per week are you training?
- For what distance are you training? Past medical and health history
- Weight goals
- Food allergies and intolerances
- Food likes and dislikes

Above all, the goal is to match energy intake to energy expenditure during training so that we have enough energy day after day to put in the quality workouts.