

# Great North Run Nutrition and hydration advice



**Newcastle Hospitals Charity is delighted to have Conor Dermody provide our Great North Runners with key nutrition and hydration advice.**

**Conor has worked as a dietitian in the NHS for more than a decade, providing dietetic input across a variety of settings within the North East.**

**This guidance is split into five sections:**

- **Optimal training diet**
- **Pre-race nutrition**
- **Hydration**
- **In-race nutrition**
- **Post-race recovery**

## **Optimal training diet**

Exercising muscles rely on carbohydrates as their main source of fuel. The amount you need will depend on your training programme and dietary goals.

### Carbohydrates

An individual's carbohydrate intake should reflect their daily training load; increasing total carbohydrate and energy intake during high-volume days and decreasing intake when volume and intensity are reduced.

Nutrient dense carbohydrate rich foods (e.g. wholegrain breads & cereals, starchy vegetables, fruit, dairy) should be prioritised to meet fuel demands, however there may also be a need to include additional carbohydrate rich foods/drinks (e.g. sports drinks, energy gels) around training to improve performance during heavy training loads.

Strategic intake of carbohydrate rich foods/drinks soon after training will aid rapid glycogen repletion.



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### Protein

Including protein rich foods throughout the day assists to build new muscle protein and red blood cells as part of the repair and adaptation process.

### Gastrointestinal upset

This can be common during hard runs. Many runners prefer to run on an empty stomach, with the pre-training food/drink eaten well in advance of the session. Low fibre foods may help to reduce gastrointestinal upsets.

## Pre-race nutrition

Adequate fuel (carbohydrates) and hydration are the main factors to consider leading up to race day. Carbohydrate loading over a 24–48-hour period before the race can help to increase muscle fuel storage and improve fuel availability during the race. Consuming low fibre foods, reducing high protein or high fat foods and using compact liquid carbohydrate foods over the last 12-24 hours before the run can help to reduce the risk of stomach upset during the run.

The pre-run meal is a vital opportunity for a final top up of fuel stores and hydration levels. The start time of your run will need to be factored into your fuelling strategy. An early morning start, where time is scarce, may require a light, low fibre carbohydrate-rich snack eaten 1-2 hours before the run e.g. flavoured milk with a muesli bar, peanut butter on toast, crumpets with banana and honey.

A later morning race time might allow for a

larger meal 3-4 hours before the start of the run, followed by a small snack or carbohydrate containing fluid closer to the race start. Some examples of larger meals could be porridge with milk and fruit, rice or pasta dishes, sandwich or bread roll with lean salad filling, banana smoothie.

**It's important to always trial your pre-race meal prior to a training run in advance of race day to ensure that you tolerate it well and have no stomach upsets or gastrointestinal distress on your big day.**

## Hydration

Fluid needs are influenced by factors that drive fluid losses such as temperature, sweat rate, exercise intensity, duration. It's not necessary or practical to replace all fluid losses during the run but rather aim to replace the fluid losses over a 4–6-hour period following the run. So, enjoy your celebratory drink after completing your run but please ensure you then consume plenty of water/juice/milk to rehydrate sufficiently. A practical way to check if you have adequately rehydrated is to check you are passing urine frequently and that it is a light straw-coloured liquid.

## In-race nutrition

For half-marathon events, like the Great North Run, having 30-60g of carbohydrate per hour is recommended to prevent muscle fatigue and to maintain pace. These should be easy to digest carbohydrate-rich options with minimal fat, fibre and protein as these slow down digestion. Energy gels, energy chews, sports bars, sports drinks and jelly babies are suitable choices and easy to carry on the run.



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Making use of the hydration stations located throughout the run will help your rehydration efforts.

**Test fuelling and fluid strategies during training to ensure you are comfortable with eating food and fluid whilst running and from aid stations.**

### Post-race recovery

Consuming a carbohydrate-rich meal or snack soon after finishing will help to maximise recovery. In addition, the recovery meal or snack should include ~20-25g of high quality protein to aid with muscle repair. Including healthy fats will also help to reduce inflammation. Fluids (predominantly water) should also be included to rehydrate and replace sweat losses. Nutrient rich wholefood choices should be prioritised.

Some recovery food suggestions include:

- Tuna, avocado and salad sandwich/on toast/on bagel
- Eggs on toast
- Yoghurt with muesli, nuts and fresh fruit



**If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch.**

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