

## Cake or Pasta? Carb loading – what's the go?

It's that time of year when our clinics are full with enthusiastic triathletes finetuning their nutrition for upcoming races. Apart from focusing on the constant fuelling up and recovering for numerous training sessions, hydration testing and the all important race plan, one of the other boxes to tick is the carbohydrate loading plan.

So Carb loading...

Carbohydrate loading is a good excuse to eat more in the days leading up to an event however the **right fuel** is all important ; Pasta – yes, cake – no.

**Benefits:** The purpose of carb loading is to maximise our muscle glycogen, or fuel stores, prior to an endurance race. It is only likely to be beneficial in events longer than 90 minutes in duration.

**History:** In the past we have heard of carb loading involving a depletion phase of three to four days on a low carb diet in conjunction with hard training and then immediately followed with a three to four day loading phase on a high carb diet combined with an exercise taper. Not fun. Thankfully also not of any additional benefit!

**The Facts:** Here are the basics to carb loading for an endurance race;

- Carb load for approximately 24 hours prior to the race.
- Aim for 10g carbohydrate/kg body weight
- Aim for low fat, low fibre, high carbohydrate foods such as low fibre cereal, low fat milk , yoghurt and creamed rice, tinned fruit, white bread, sports drinks and cordial, nutritional food supplements and of course, pasta. Resist the urge to eat cake.
- Use in conjunction with an exercise taper.
- Do several “trial runs” in conjunction with longer training sessions leading up to the race and adjust food choices and amounts as required. At nutrition works we find that everyone is different and not all food choices suit everybody. Tweaking your carb loading plan (and race plan) is essential for an overall nutrition plan to be beneficial.
- Females may not require the same amount of carbohydrate so if you can't reach the target of 10g carb/kg it may not make any difference.





So there it is. Carbohydrate loading is of great benefit to endurance athletes and essential for races such as Ironman triathlon but - You need. To practice. Your plan.

Our team of Sports Dietitians at nutrition works are sports nutrition specialists and well practiced at making sense of all the numbers and can assist you with developing your own individual carb loading plan if required.

Stay fuelled and we look forward to seeing many of you down at Busselton in December for Ironman!

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