

COMPLETE PERFORMANCE: THE LOW CARB FIASCO

Get your fuel mix right - Let's clear things up about the LOW CARB fiasco!

Carbohydrates are your main fuel source providing energy for daily living “behind the scenes” as well as when you need to ramp up the intensity for exercise and physically demanding work e.g. labour-type work. Use this energy wisely! The media have given you mixed messages, somewhat correct but lacking scientific basis and common sense, which is why a lot of people are misinformed and confused. The different forms of carbohydrate are useful for different situations and can be used to your advantage for athletic performance, however if you are not wise with the TYPE and TIMING of carbohydrate – e.g. if refined foods are taking place in your regular food habits instead of whole foods, you could be sacrificing your physique and this is when body fat and blood glucose control (diabetes) can become an issue. Read on for tips and meal ideas on how to get this right!

Take home message: Instead of no carbs, choose the right carbs at the right time. Use fast releasing carbohydrate (table sugar, gels, honey, sweets, bananas, raisins / dates, and refined foods like white bread and white rice) only during or after exercise if you are planning on training or competing more than once a day or going to train again the following day. These carbs provide quick energy release and efficient energy storage. It is important that you have topped up energy stores for exercise or else your muscles will be empty, this is where carbohydrates are stored for use during exercise, and empty muscles will limit your performance and digestion of other nutrients, not to mention mental clarity and balanced mood. In all other cases slow releasing (most fresh fruit, vegetables, and whole grains like brown rice, wholegrain wheat, quinoa, rye & wholegrain breads, barley, wholemeal pasta, oat cereals) carbohydrates are the best sort to eat. These carbs provide a sustained energy release which helps with blood glucose and appetite control, along with providing vitamins and minerals which will assist your metabolism and how energy is used. The natural source is always superior: a banana is better than an energy bar, an orange is better than orange juice.

Breakfast example: Porridge with a dollop of ricotta cheese or plain low fat yoghurt, with fruit and some nuts (2 table spoons) + water.

Lunch example: Wholegrain sandwich with 60g smoked salmon, lite/reduced fat cream cheese, and salad with an orange + water.

Snack example: “Be Natural” trail bar muesli bar with an apple and a trim milk latte or green tea.

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If you would like to know more about how to get your fuel mix right and how to manage your daily eating or training nutrition. Becky is available for nutrition consultation on Thursday’s from 8am – 1pm at SportsMed clinic on Bealy Ave, call or email to make an appointment.

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