WHAT WE'RE READING...

Triathlon Nutrition Myths & Misconceptions

Keeping up on the latest nutrition science is challenging because it changes often, and this affects its application to your training and competition nutrition planning.

Here I want to address some common nutrition myths that float around the athletic community and help clear the air on a few misconceptions from the confusing world of nutrition for athletes.

Below are a few of the more common myths that I encounter from athletes on a regular basis.

Myth #1: I need to carbo load the night before a big race.

The concept of carbohydrate loading has existed for quite some time and, while there can be positive results from using this technique, most athletes simply do not need it. Yeah, that's right, I did say that.

Specifically, if you are following a metabolically efficient nutrition plan which promotes the use of your internal fat stores to be used as energy, and preserves carbohydrate stores, you will not need to overload the system with a huge amount of carbohydrates immediately before a race. Doing so can trigger GI distress, a triathlete's worst enemy.

Additionally, if you are racing sprint or Olympic distances, your body will likely have enough carbohydrate stores to get you through the entire race with a good pre-feeding beforehand. For longer distance races, consuming a few more carbohydrate servings the day or two before the race may be helpful but is not a necessary component if you have already developed your body's ability to burn fat more efficiently.

If you do choose to carbo load, it would be better to use the fast approach where you implement it 24 to 36 hours before a race rather than five to seven days before the race.

Myth #2: I need to eat between 200 and 400 calories per hour during training and competition.

This one simply has no truth in it for individual athletes. Because of the differences in gender, distances, environment and metabolic efficiency, it is almost impossible to pinpoint a calorie range for athletes to consume during competition without formal assessment or experimentation and data collection during training.

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