

Ultra runners often train really diligently but are let down by missing just a few key basics of nutrition. Or the plan they used for a 2 hour race simply won't see them through those longer events in good shape. Even if you are an experienced ultra runner, there are probably a few simple changes you can make to your nutrition plan in training and on race day that will improve your race day experience.

Fluid

Most people seem to be able to comfortably consume and absorb 300-500ml fluid per hour. Runners of smaller stature need less than larger athletes, and weather conditions are also an important factor. The longer we go, the less forgiving the body is if we get our fluid intake wrong, and I'm sure most of us have experienced dehydration and the nasty feeling that goes with it, at some stage in our athletic endeavours. That said, it is also important not to consume too much fluid as this can be equally as dangerous. In most usual NZ weather conditions, consuming more than 750ml per hour should NOT be necessary. It's not only important how much fluid we consume, but also what it is that we are consuming. We strongly recommend that you have fluid that doesn't contain calories eg water with 1-2 [Endurolytes Fizz](#) per 750ml, as often your stomach will need a rest from calories but still needs to keep the fluids coming in. If you have sports drink mixed into your fluids, then you are unable to do this. If you like your water unflavoured, then use plain water and a couple of [Endurolyte capsules](#) per hour.

Fuel

We recommend [Perpetuem](#) as the main fuel of choice for endurance events where the heart rate is mostly expected to be below 75% MRH and run time will exceed 3 hours. And while you need to experiment in training, we find most people only need ½ - 1 scoops or 1-3 [Perpetuem Solids](#) per hour to fulfil ALL their calorie needs. Perpetuem differs from the traditional gels and sports drink in that it contains a little protein which helps reduce muscle soreness, and a little fat, which will help you to feel full. It is an economical option for fueling, both in terms of cost and weight that needs to be carried - your fuel for most events will fit into a couple of flasks carried in your pocket. But don't then start adding in bars, bananas, fruit cake etc or you will find yourself well and truly overfed. If you prefer to use [gels](#) then 1-3 per hour, depending on your size should be sufficient.

We strongly recommend that you stay away from products that contain a lot of simple sugar ie those ending in -ose: sucrose, fructose, glucose. In simple terms, we can consume them faster than we can absorb them and their use increases your chance of the dreaded stomach distress. It's like trying to run after eating a couple of bars of chocolate! Sugars will also give you highs and lows, not something you want during an endurance event. If you are going to hit the trusty coke in the last hour or so of your event, then make sure you have practised this in training, and don't consume too much!

Electrolytes and Cramping

Cramp seems to be the biggest limiting factor for many athletes. It is incredibly frustrating if you have trained well, are primed for a great race, then it all falls apart. So what can you do to minimise the chances of cramp? It's an article all on its own but here are a few pointers to start with.

- **Correct fluid intake.** See above.
- **Specificity of training.** If you usually train at x intensity then come race day you are running at y intensity then chances are you going to have some issues. Include some intensity in your training that simulates what you experience in racing. Make sure that your training terrain replicates as best as possible what you will experience on race day. Doing all your training on road, then doing an event that's off road is likely to be asking for trouble.
- **Correct caloric intake.** See above.
- **Insufficient electrolytes.** Electrolyte requirements differ significantly between individuals so it can be tricky to judge. We recommend taking a couple of [Endurolytes](#) per hour or put an [Endurolytes Fizz](#) in each water bottle. Always carry extra Endurolyte capsules on long training sessions and during races.
- **Too much simple sugar.** See above.
- **Keep your muscles in good order.** Knots in calves and tight quads aren't going to help you not to cramp. Find yourself a good massage therapist and treat those legs to a rub, or do them yourself.

If you aren't sure how much you should be using of what, or which products would be best, [send me an email](#), including your weight and ballpark time (this just tells how hard you are likely to be running) and we'll send you a suggested fuel plan.