Holmes Fitness Coaching

Performance Cycling

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Nine Nutrition Tips

In the inaugural issue of the Performance Cycling newsletter (December 2007), I introduced the 3 elements of cycling performance. These include *Training*, *Nutrition* and *Recovery*. In this issue, I offer 9 nutrition tips that can maximize your cycling performance as well as improve your overall health:

1. **Drink at least one bottle of liquid per hour on a ride. More on a hot, humid day.** This is perhaps the most important step you can take to ensure a successful ride. Dehydration has a dramatic, negative effect on cycling performance. For instance, dehydration of only 2% of your total body weight can impair your performance. Dehydration of 5% can reduce your work output by as much as 10%.

2. **For rides under one hour, water is sufficient. For rides over an hour, consider using a sports drink.** For longer rides, in addition to hydration, you need to replenish carbohydrates and electrolytes. Research has shown that cyclists who use a carbohydrate drink such as Gatorade can exercise for an hour longer than those who drink only water.

3. **For rides over two hours, consider eating something such as an energy bar, fruit or cookies.** At some point, if you ride long enough, you are going to get hungry and sports drinks will no longer be sufficient. When this happens, a light snack may be just what you need. If you do a lot of long distance cycling, experiment with different foods to see what works best for you. Also, make sure you select foods that are easily transported on a bike.

4. **Eat before you get hungry and drink before you get thirsty during a ride.** The reason is simple. The dehydration process will begin long before you feel thirsty. Get in the habit of drinking from your bottle every 15 minutes whether you feel thirsty or not. This will help minimize the chances of getting dehydrated. It will also keep your energy levels up on long rides (assuming you are using a sports drink).

5. **Eat before, during (if it is a relatively long ride) and after every ride.** Eating before a ride provides you with the energy you will need during the ride. If it is a fairly long ride (over 2 hours), food intake can help ensure you have sufficient glycogen to fuel your muscles throughout the ride. Eating after the ride is an excellent way to initiate the recovery process.

6. **Facilitate recovery by eating a carbohydrate-rich meal immediately following your ride.** It is important to eat a carbohydrate-rich snack after your ride because your body can convert carbohydrate into muscle glycogen more quickly than normal for a few hours after a long ride (90 minutes or more). The greatest benefit is achieved in the first two

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Cycle-Max Coaching

It is with great pleasure that I introduce my Cycle-Max Coaching program. Cycle-Max Coaching is a one-on-one, virtual coaching process that will maximize your cycling performance. It is based on the idea that there are three primary elements to effective performance: *training*, *nutrition* and *recovery*. The primary goal of Cycle-Max Coaching is to facilitate the integration of these elements in a way that allows you to achieve your cycling goals. In other words, through the Cycle-Max Coaching process, we work together to develop a systematic training program that incorporates effective nutritional practices and allows for sufficient recovery. To learn more about Cycle-Max Coaching, visit my website at www.holmesfitness.com and request a FREE CONSULTATION to begin the process that will maximize your cycling performance.

Nine Nutrition Tips (continued)

hours. Try to ingest a post-ride meal of at least 50 grams of carbohydrate and 300 total calories (more if you go for a very long ride). The meal should include some protein as well to promote muscle repair and growth.

7. **Eat breakfast everyday**. Eat a healthy breakfast within two hours of waking each morning. This will help boost your energy levels and reduce hunger. Also, studies have shown that eating breakfast on a daily basis is the one behavior that most healthy weight people have in common.

8. **Develop daily eating habits that emphasize 5 food groups: fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy products**. You've probably heard this before but I'll say it again. Eating from these food groups will provide you with the high quality carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals you need to fuel your rides and to facilitate the recovery process. If you fail to eat consistently from these food groups, your cycling performance will suffer.

9. **Don't be afraid to indulge, once in a while, in your favorite desert**. One of the great benefits of cycling is that it burns a lot of calories! So don't be afraid to eat some of your favorite desserts and snacks. Eliminating your favorite foods, even when they are "unhealthy", is a recipe for binge eating. So feel free to indulge once in a while. If you have a problem with eating too much of your favorite treats, try buying them one at a time and not by the box or bag. For example, if you love doughnuts, visit the local shop and purchase ONE for immediate consumption, not a dozen to eat during the week. Likewise, if you are an ice cream lover, go buy yourself an ice cream cone and enjoy. Don't buy a half-gallon of ice cream and leave it in your freezer. You may find that it likes to call to you at the most inopportune times!

About the Author

Dr. Tyrone A. Holmes, LPC, CPT is a speaker, trainer, consultant, fitness & cycling coach, author and competitive cyclist.