



Marathoners need a good nutrient mix

About 24,000 runners and walkers will line up on Ala Moana on Sunday for the 5 a.m. start of the 31st Honolulu Marathon. So this week is taper time. Participants need to be well rested and well nourished for the event, so nutrition issues will be on their minds.

QUESTION: What should marathoners do about their nutrition during this week before the marathon?

ANSWER: First, fill up the fuel tanks. Humans have two major "fuel tanks." One contains carbohydrate, the "high-octane" energy source needed to maintain a good pace. The other contains fat, or "regular" fuel, that helps support endurance.

Most every runner knows to load up on high-carbohydrate foods with plenty of starches and sugars. Generally, most will get plenty of fat. Overly avoiding fat might not be a good idea. The muscles of endurance athletes are good at storing fat and actually prefer to use this readily available source of fat during endurance exercise.

Second, salt should not be restricted except for medical rea-

sons. The average participant will sweat off about 3 teaspoons of salt during the marathon, so it's not good to start with a salt deficit.

Third, adequate protein intake is important to support the recovery of muscles from heavy training. Overall, emphasize high-carbohydrate foods, but do not avoid a variety of other foods.

Fourth, adequate water is important, but it's not really possible to store up on water during the days before the marathon.

Q: What should participants do during the event?

A: The order of nutritional priorities is water, carbohydrate and salt. Fortunately, most sports drinks meet these needs with the right mix.

The drink on the course this year is a new proprietary drink made by a Japanese company specifically for the Honolulu Marathon. Similar to Gatorade, each 8-ounce serving contains 55 calories, 14 grams of sugar, 110 milligrams of sodium, 30 milligrams of potassium and has a lemon-lime flavor.

Tastes of the drink will be available at the Marathon Sports

& Fitness Expo at the Outrigger Reef on the Beach, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday, and at the Niketown store, 1 to 6 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.

The drink has enough carbohydrate to meet the needs of runners during the event. Those who use carbo gels and sports bars need to dilute them by drinking at least 10 to 15 times as much water as the gel or bar to avoid stomach problems. Sports drinks can't properly dilute gels or bars.

Q: How can marathoners best recover after the marathon?

A: Good overall nutrition is the goal. Plenty of protein can help support muscle repair and protect the immune system. The stress of the marathon takes a toll on the immune system, and many runners catch colds afterward.

A few days of rest are important, but ease back into low-intensity training. Studies on both animals and humans indicate that abrupt cessation of habitual exercise leads to a rapid gain of body fat. Even light training can prevent this.

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