



Getting fit for Honolulu Mall-athon

DECEMBER is the month for endurance events. Tens of thousands will participate in the Honolulu Marathon. But 1 million will participate in the 2005 Honolulu Christmas Shopathon. Unlike the marathon, most participants in the shopathon will fail to train or plan a strategy. But both events require nutritional planning for successful completion.

Question: How do the demands of a shopathon compare with a marathon?

Answer: Like marathoners, shopathoners need endurance. In addition, serious shopping competition requires quick reactions and snap decisions. In a marathon, competitors can space out on a runner's high as long as the body keeps going. But shoppers must keep both body and mind primed for continuous high-level performance.

Q: How can a shopathoner use nutrition to support high-level performance?

A: Start well hydrated and maintain adequate hydration throughout. To help the body hold onto fluids consumed before the shopathon starts, be sure to consume some high-protein foods along with carbs for a balanced breakfast. This will help the body hold onto water and delay the first pit stop.

Water loss from sweating during shopping can vary greatly from one person to another. But the average shopathoner in an all-day event can lose one to two liters of fluid. Drinking a liter of fluid during the event might be enough to replace losses if shopping is primarily in an air-conditioned environment. Frequent running between stores on a hot day, however, can increase fluid needs to as much as two liters.

Carry a carbohydrate snack. Bananas or raisins are perfect. If you will be shopping for more than three hours and won't have

time for a meal, pack a sports bar that has at least six grams of protein.

If you are shopping for the whole day, plan to stop for a light to moderate lunch, avoiding heavy meals that require too much time to digest. Heavy meals demand too much blood flow to the intestines.

This decreases blood flow to the muscles and brain, depriving them of the oxygen and nutrients needed for top performance.

Shopathoners in an all-day event should start off at an easy pace and build up gradually as the event unfolds. Otherwise, great deals can be missed late in the event, a condition often called "hitting the mall."

Alan Titchenal, Ph.D, CNS and Joannie Dobbs, Ph.D, CNS
are nutritionists in the Department of Human Nutrition, Food and Animal Sciences,
College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, UH-Manoa.
Dr. Dobbs also works with the University Health Service.
