

FEATURED ARTICLE



BY DR. KRISTEN BOVEE

Peninsula Naturopathic Clinic
Hydrate IV Wellness Centre

5 SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Whether you are a seasoned marathon runner or a novice triathlete, treating your body well is a major determinate of your performance. With athletic event and sports season coming upon us, the following tips can help you train, perform and recover optimally.

1) Get enough restorative sleep:

Sleep is an essential part of athletic recovery. It is at night that our rebuilding hormones such as DHEA and growth hormone release at its highest level of the day. It is necessary however, to reach our deepest level of sleep in order for our bodies to heal.

Melatonin is produced by our brains and assists us into restorative sleep. Low blood sugar levels at night causes cortisol release, which is a common cause of insomnia. If you are having trouble getting and staying asleep, eating a balanced snack of proteins and carbs such as apple and nut butter can assist your brain in producing enough melatonin and keeping stable blood sugar levels through the night.

2) Eat a balanced breakfast- Include protein and fat:

You hear it all the time. Start your day with breakfast. If you don't have an appetite in the morning, start with small portions to train your body to get used to eating earlier. Breakfast determines your energy levels in the day. Before you head out for a morning workout or a run, be sure you have eaten a balanced meal with

protein, carbs and fats. Some healthy options for breakfast include:

- Egg, avocado on a bed of greens and whole grain toast
- Greek yogurt, berries, chia and nuts
- Steel cut oats, ground nuts, and a scoop of protein powder with almond milk

3) Drink enough water and replenish your electrolytes:

Being hydrated is essential for both performance and recovery. Losing 2% of body weight in fluid can decrease performance by up to 25%. If you are not sure how much to drink, the following formula is a good guide: Multiply your weight in pounds by 2/3 to calculate the daily ounces you need. To further calculate taking into account exercise, divide the number of minutes you exercise by 30 minutes and multiply this by 12 ounces; add this to your optimal daily intake.

Be sure to begin with 8 ounces of water before starting exercise and rehydrate every 15 minutes. Electrolyte replenishment is necessary if your workout and training is more intense.

4) Eat a balanced diet, limit supplement fads:

You don't need to take fancy supplements to perform well. Food is often the only medicine we need. However if you are consistently having symptoms of poor performance and recovery despite your best efforts to eat well, it is best to have a naturopathic doctor or holistic nutritionist analyze your diet so they can make appropriate recommendations for you.

5) Start slow, set goals, and stay consistent:

When increasing activity levels or ramping up your training, it is best to set realistic goals for performance; take it slow and steady. Some of my favorite apps include Strava, Couch to 5K Runner and PEAR personal fitness coach. The apple watch and Fitbit are also motivating and easy devices that help you track your performance.

With so many fun events coming up (such as the TC10K 30th Annual) this spring, these easy habits will help you perform your best and feel great doing it.