

## DO I NEED TO INCREASE MY CALORIES IF I INCREASE MY TRAINING?

By Sunny Blende, Sports Nutritionist

You may be wondering as you begin to increase the hours per week you are working out whether you also need to eat more food to fuel those workouts. The answer is yes, and here's why.

Although you may be saying to yourself, "No, I'll exercise more, eat the same and lose some of my extra fat." this is not the most efficient way to lose fat. That's because trained muscles burn a higher ratio of fat (to carbohydrates) for fuel when exercising harder and longer. And muscles need more fuel when exercising in order to become trained, in other words, become "better-better-burners."

The whole process needs a course in biochemistry to understand every nuance but the short version goes like this. We have organelles in our muscle cells that have small surfaces covered with fat-burning enzymes. The more we train or exercise, the more of these enzymes we make. Our body is adapting to the "flight or fight" response. When we exercise, our body thinks we are in danger and fleeing - a tiger or some other such creature like our coach. If we keep training regularly or especially if we increase our training, our body thinks this tiger comes around every day and we'd better make sure we have enough energy to keep out pacing this beast. Since we all store enough fat to fuel hours of exercise, even if we are very low body fat, our adaptation is to increase the number of enzymes that can tap into this huge reservoir.

There is one more caveat. In order to start burning fat, we must have a source of carbohydrates readily available. It doesn't work to burn pure fat, so we must have some available carbs to get the process started. And the more unfit we start out on our way to becoming super-trained, the higher ratio of carbs to fat we burn. So remember to increase your carbohydrate intake as well as your total calorie intake when increasing your training.

A long explanation for a simple question but it is important to understand the need for more food. Not only do we need the calories to build more fat burning enzymes, but we also need the increased energy (carbohydrates) to do all this training and reap the benefits.

How many more calories for a newly dedicated athlete? About 200 to 400 depending on your size, how many hours a week you're working out and how intensely you're doing it. That might include a sports bar, gel or drink during your long or intense bouts of exercise, and a snack within thirty minutes (always) after your training. Add some complex unrefined carbohydrates at dinner such as 100 percent whole wheat bread, grains, brown rice and vegetables, and you'll be well on your way to becoming a healthier, fitter, trained athlete.