

How To Fuel Up During An Ultra

Four tips every runner should know before tackling an ultra.

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1. You'll burn roughly 400 to 600 calories per hour during your run, but your body can absorb only 240 to 280 calories per hour. You'll never dig out of this deficit, but eating early and often will keep you from bonking. Early on, you can survive on gels and other carbs, but after four hours, add one part protein to four parts carbs (a mix found in most sports bars), says **Sunny Blende, M.S.**, a sports nutritionist and ultrarunner from Sausalito, California.
2. Few of us can stomach 10 gels or energy bars, so finding agreeable real food is critical. Blende recommends turkey or PB&J sandwiches, chicken-noodle soup, potatoes, pretzels, and bananas.
3. Long before race day, play around with different water bottles, packs, and drinks in training so you've figured out how to stay hydrated. Many ultras require weigh-ins at aid stations to check hydration status. Your performance suffers if you lose three percent of your body weight in water. Your fluid needs will depend on the weather, your pace, and your sweat rate, but figure a liter per hour, on average, says Blende.
4. Don't forget: Too much water can cause potentially fatal hyponatremia. A watchband that becomes tight is often a sign. To respond to the condition, stop and drink 1/4 cup of water with four bouillon cubes before proceeding, says Blende. Better still, avoid overdrinking and consume salty foods or drinks--about 200 to 300 milligrams per hour, says Blende. If it's hot, consider taking sodium tablets, such as Succeed S!Caps.