

# TRAINING TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH DIABETES

When planning for an event like a marathon, it is important to speak to your diabetes healthcare team. They can give you individual advice about managing your diabetes during exercise, like whether you need to adjust any medications and how often to check your blood glucose levels. Go to your appointment armed with your questions to get the most out of the time.

The following tips may also be helpful.

## Looking after your feet

As you are starting your training it is especially important to look after your feet if you have diabetes.

Make sure you have appropriate running shoes that fit well – getting advice from a specialist sports shop or your podiatrist might be helpful.

Run in socks with the seam on the outside, this really cuts down on any rubbing.

Check your feet daily for any changes, including cuts and blisters, colour changes, swelling, pain, bruises or build-up of hard skin. If you have any concerns, especially if something is not healing well, get your feet checked out with your diabetes healthcare team urgently.

## Pre- race nutrition

Training is a time to trial the foods you will eat on race day, so you have a nutrition plan for the day of the event. Your eating plan is as important as your training plan.

- Have a meal rich in carbohydrates 2 to 4 hours before the race, don't try anything new on the day of the race as it is more difficult to know how it will affect your blood glucose levels and if it will cause any stomach discomfort (e.g. cramps).
- Porridge, toast and bagels are all good options. Stick to white versions without seeds, nuts etc. these are high in fibre and can delay digestion and cause discomfort

- You may need an additional snack 1 to 2 hours before running, check your blood glucose levels regularly (including during the race) and be sure to carry extra hypo treatments with you.

The closer to the race your last meal or snack is, the more likely it is you will need to reduce your bolus (or meal time) insulin dose. This is different for everyone and you should get advice from your diabetes healthcare team as you may need to make changes to your basal or bolus insulin, or other medications for diabetes such as Sulphonylureas, due to the effect exercise can have on blood glucose levels.

## During the race

We need to take on extra nutrition during a long event like a marathon, to fuel our muscles.

- For a rough guide aim for around 15-30g of carbohydrates every 30 mins, but you may need more
- Have things like a banana (big has 30g carb), energy bars, gels (20-30g), sports chews, fruit cake, jam sandwiches, dates
- A combination of fast and slower acting carbs is needed if you are preventing hypos as well as for performance

## Post-race nutrition

You also need to plan for what food will be available after the race. Check out the local area in advance, either in person or research it online, to see what foods are available or if you should bring your own post-race snacks or meal.

- It's important to eat some carbs and protein soon after the race to aid recovery of your energy stores and for muscle repair.
- You could have your next meal. Make sure you have a combination of carbs, protein and fluids with electrolytes (this may need planning if you are buying something locally, so check what is available in the area before you run).

Good options include:

- Sandwiches or wraps with chicken, fish or egg and salad or veggies

- Muesli and Greek yoghurt or milk with extra fruit
- Pasta or rice based dishes

Remember the importance of healthy eating.

Continue to check blood glucose levels as insulin sensitivity can be increased for up to 48 hours after exercise, meaning hypos can be more likely. Discuss this with your diabetes healthcare team before the race and practice your strategy beforehand.

## Hydration

Before the big race, make sure you are well hydrated (the colour of your urine can give you an indication, it should be a pale-yellow colour). It's important to avoid both dehydration and over hydration.

Training is a good time to figure out how your body responds to different types and volumes of fluid while running.

Thirst is a good indication of when to drink during exercise, try little and often and don't introduce any new types of fluids on race day as you won't know the effect on your stomach or blood glucose levels

Drinks containing electrolytes can help prevent dehydration but also contain carbs so think about the effect on blood glucose.

Post-race rehydration is really important to replace any lost fluids. The amount you need varies from person to person, but try to have some salt with your post-race meal to help you rehydrate. Milk can also be a good rehydration fluid.

## Ergogenic Aids

In sport the term ergogenic aid broadly means a substance or technique used to enhance performance. You may have heard of several things that are claimed to be ergogenic aids such as caffeine or beetroot juice. There are some important things to remember when considering ergogenic aids:

- Is there genuine robust scientific evidence to suggest a benefit to sporting performance and that it is safe to use.
- Always speak to a dietitian, medical professional and training coach (if you have one).

- Is the substance legal and would it pass an anti-doping test? Look for the Informed Sport logo Sports Nutrition Certification| Informed Sport ([wetestyoutrust.com](http://wetestyoutrust.com)) and check out UK anti-doping About | UK Anti-Doping ([ukad.org.uk](http://ukad.org.uk))
- If you have diabetes, also think about the effect that any ergogenic aid may have on your diabetes management.