

If you want to paddle long distances, you need to have enough fuel in the tank to get the job done!

Getting out on the water and logging in those kilometers is awesome in helping you get prepared BUT equally important & often overlooked is proper nutrition & hydration.

After a couple of hours, depending on intensity, performance quickly drops without proper nutrition & hydration, which is absolutely crucial to completing your adventure.

Leading Up To A Big Paddle:

This is the time to load up, eating meals high in carbohydrates such as pasta, whole grains, vegetables, fruit etc. These meals will load up your body's reserves. Don't be shy, this is the time to dig in and have that extra helping. You'll be glad you did!

Breakfast:

Your last big meal before hitting the water.

High-energy breakfast cereals work well, adding fruit on the side and maybe a bagel loaded up with jam or cheese for an extra boost.

Hydration:

Make sure you have several glasses of water before you take off. Also, just before hitting the water, a good idea is to consume an energy drink prior to launching.

During The Paddle:

Drink BEFORE you start feeling thirsty! Plan on taking sips of water or your energy drink approximately every 15 minutes while on the water.

Have a light snack, energy bar or fruit in small quantities while on the water, keeping a steady flow of nutrients flowing through your bloodstream.

If your out for a whole day paddle then stop for a decent lunch, loading up on foods to help carry you through the remainder of your day. Multigrain Sandwiches loaded up with plenty of fillings.

At The End Of The Paddle:

Now that your day is done, it is time to resupply your energy stores.

Have an energy drink to replace those lost fluids. Even if you have been sipping fluids all day, you will still tend to experience fluid losses.

Try and consume high energy foods such as pasta, wild rice, whole grains and fruits & vegetables.

Don't be afraid of having a beer with that evening meal, you earned it!

Remember, the longer you wait to refuel after putting in that big effort, the less effective it will be. To perform well again the next day, it is crucial to re-hydrate and eat high energy foods as soon as possible so don't delay!

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate foods are what the body relies on most for fuel during exercise,

A high-carbohydrate diet increases energy for muscles & should come from eating bread, cereal, grains, pasta, vegetables, and fruit.

Fats

Fats are an important energy source.

Protein

Proteins are the major structural component of the cell and are used for growth, repair and maintenance of body tissue.

Vitamins and Minerals

Vitamins and minerals have an important role in energy but they don't contribute energy themselves.

Iron and calcium are the minerals most commonly deficient in athletes

Fluids

Drinking fluids before, during, and after training is essential.

The normal daily water intake ranges from 2.5 litres in winter to 3.5 litres in summer. During exercise, the body loses fluid through the skin as perspiration and as water vapour in expired air.

You must drink before you feel thirsty. Once you are thirsty you are already slightly dehydrated.

The day before a lengthy training session you should drink as much fluids as you can tolerate. It is important to note that caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, and soft drinks) and alcohol should be used with caution because they can have a negative effect.

Supplements

The sports world is filled with stories about supplements, all claiming to improve speed, strength and endurance.

However there are no short-cuts to the top. Many of these supplements have either not been tested or have not lived up to their claims when tests have been conducted.

Without a doubt, fruits and vegetables including:

Oranges, cantaloupe, strawberries, kiwi, bananas, green and red peppers, broccoli, spinach, tomatoes, carrots, and sweet potatoes.

Vegetarian Athletes

From people who eat only plant source food, some of them additionally consume dairy products and eggs as well which is a lower risk of poor nutritional intake

For athletes who are strict vegans, it is necessary to select their foods very carefully including adequate sources of minerals & vitamins like zinc, iron, calcium, riboflavin, vitamin B12 and vitamin D.