

NUTRITION



ENERGY IN A BAR

Energy bars provide predominantly carbohydrate. This is essential to spare the limited stored carbohydrate in the body, to maintain blood glucose levels and provide energy for further work. For best results this carbohydrate should take a variety of forms to provide a mixture of quick release and slow release glucose into the blood stream. Some options will contain protein too and these are great for minimising muscle breakdown during exercise. When checking out the protein type look for natural food proteins such as ground almonds, whey or Soy isolate. Clif Bars and Bounce protein balls are both great natural energy snacks.



RUNNING FOR LONGER

Long runs will require some extra fuelling, particularly once you go over 90 minutes and this is where gels and easily digestible bars could offer some added benefit too. Which you choose depends on your session, goals and personal preference. Certainly a carbohydrate drink containing electrolytes is more important as distance extends.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ELECTROLYTES

Choosing a drink / gel with electrolytes (salts) added will provide superior hydration. Failing to include these in your drink on longer runs, particularly sodium, can lead to headache, nausea, cramp and confusion. Just drinking water, squash or a sports drink without these salts can lead to an increase in your need to urinate, which is not ideal during a training session. Salts have an added advantage of reducing urine output and keeping you on running strong rather than queuing for the toilet, so make sure they are included in your drink/gel when training over 90 minutes. Try something like SHOTZ Electrolyte Tablets.

FUELLING OPTIONS

So we've established that carbohydrate, electrolytes and fluid are all increasing important as you run for longer. The way you choose to take this on board has much to do with personal preference, but the practicality of carrying products, unwrapping and consuming on the run also comes into play here.

Still the easiest way to get all of these ingredients into the body in the correct concentrations and amounts is to consume them in a drink with 750ml of a sports drink typically providing 45-60g carbohydrate (your body can only use about 60 grams of carbohydrate during each hour of exercise), but if you're heading out the door for a 2 hour run it is unlikely you will be able to carry 1.5 litres of drink. Often a more practical option is to have an energy bar prior to your run (30-60 mins prior depending on type) as it is often easier to pick up extra water, rather than a carbohydrate drink during a run or race. In the second hour, simply carrying a bar or gel can provide enough carbohydrate energy to get you through. Breaking small pieces from an energy bar can assist steady energy provision but if you find it difficult to eat on the run, a gel may be a better option. Be aware that with both of these options you will need to drink water too, otherwise the high concentration of carbohydrate could cause stomach upset, bloating and dehydration. 500-600ml water will need to be sipped with each 40-50g gel or equivalent carbohydrate in a bar.

CAFFEINE FREE ENERGY BARS

Clif bars main carbohydrate source is organic brown rice syrup. This is a mixture of soy protein isolate, rice flour and malt extract. Although rice flour will release quickly into the blood stream, the presence of the soy protein will slow down this release providing a more steady energy supply. Rolled oats, raisins and cane juice provide further carbohydrate sources, with organic flaxseed providing some healthy fats. This is a great choice which helps you get carbohydrate, protein and some antioxidants too, making preparation for a short hard run easy work. (available from www.wiggle.co.uk)