



Aflac Iron Girl Bloomington Duathlon Planning Your Race Day Nutrition

By Marni Rakes, M.S.

Welcome to your new life as an Iron Girl athlete. Training for a duathlon is now your lifestyle. Your healthy habit of exercising to lose weight turned into an addiction of training for a race. Now it is race week and your structured training routine is about to make you question your race day strategy. If your training is spot-on and you feel ready to race, how do you nutritionally fuel for a race so that you can successfully make it to the finish line?

Whether you are training for your first Iron Girl event, racing for fun or hoping to place in the top of your age group, a solid race day nutrition plan will absolutely help you get to the finish line. Regardless of your racing experience, what you eat before and during a race will help you race efficiently so that you can reach your number one goal of becoming an Iron Girl athlete.

Pre-Race Nutrition

Continue to believe in yourself that your healthy eating routine will provide you with the necessary fuel to finish the upcoming Iron Girl event. Ignore the thoughts that you must stuff yourself with food in order to ensure that you will not run out of energy during your race. The focus of your pre-race nutrition is to view all food as fuel. Fuel for your upcoming event. The reason why you don't need to overdo it with food before a race is because your muscles can only store so much food until food is stored as fat. With a few days of resting and a reduction in training volume, a well-balanced diet will encourage the storage of digested carbs (glycogen) as fuel and thus, you will have plenty of fuel on race day morning.

While you are diligently consuming 3 balanced meals and several snacks, during the days before your race, be sure to focus on healthy food choices to keep your heart healthy and blood sugar stable. Just like fuel in a car, you would never over-fill your gas tank and expect to go further and faster than if you only filled up the tank to the top. Not only will you make a mess, but also overflowing your gas tank is a major waste of money. Also, if you neglect filling up the gas tank before a long trip, you will end up paying for it as you run out of gas in the middle of your drive.



It is important to eat the best food possible, at the right times, in order to keep your energy levels high before the race. It isn't until your body chemistry and blood chemicals are stable that you will find it easy to eat healthy foods and stop eating when you are satisfied. Although carbohydrates are your major source of fuel during a race, combining lean/low fat protein with your carbs, while portioning out your meals, will help you from overeating during your meals. Nothing is worse than waking up on race day morning with a bloated belly and no appetite for a pre-race snack.

Do not become discouraged if you have trouble controlling your food intake before a race because pre-race nutrition takes time to balance out the chemistry in the body. Although your pre-race nutrition will begin several days before a race and come race day, a healthy diet is critical when trying to perfect your race day nutrition. But with a nutrition plan to keep you on track, you will have the right amount of energy to finish any race!

Marni Rakes holds a Master of Science degree in Exercise Physiology, is a certified sports nutritionist (International Society of Sports Nutrition) and a USAT Level-1 coach. Marni is an active endurance triathlete, who recently qualified to compete in the Ford Ironman World Championship in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, in October 2007, and the Ford Ironman World Championship 70.3 in Clearwater, FL, in November 2007.

Sample Nutrition Plan

2 nights before a race- Dinner:

* Eat between 6-7 p.m.

* 450-500 calories.

* *Prioritize complex carbohydrates, a little fiber and fat and lean/low fat protein. Minimize high fiber/gassy foods, simple sugars, fatty foods and high calorie foods.*

Options: (mix and match as you choose to give yourself a satisfying meal)

Pasta (1-2 cups)

Pizza (thin crust, 2-3 small pieces)

Bread (whole grain)

Sweet potato (toppings on side)

Brown/dirty rice

Fish (grilled)

Chicken, turkey (grilled)

Salad (dressing on the side)

Omelet with bread

Wrap (avoid high calorie toppings and sauces)

Sub/Sandwich (avoid fatty meats and high calorie toppings and sauces)



Whole grain waffles and egg whites
Veggie burger sandwich
Tofu and Pita bread
20-24 ounces water

2 nights before race - Evening snack:

- * Consume at least an hour before bed and an hour after dinner.
- * *100-150 calories.*
- * *Prioritize protein*

Options:

Yogurt (less than 80 calories)
1-cup skim/soy milk
1-ounce cheese
10-15 nuts
8 ounces water

1 day before race:

400-500 calorie breakfast
150-250 calorie snack (mid-morning)
50-100 calorie pre-lunch snack (protein)
400-500 calorie lunch
150-250 calorie snack (mid-afternoon)
50-100 calorie pre-dinner meal (protein)
1-cup water w/ each meal and at least 1 sport bottle of water (20-24 ounces) between meals.

1 day before race – Dinner:

- **Eat between 5:30-6:30 p.m.*
- **400-450 calories.*
- **Prioritize complex carbohydrates, a little fiber and fat and lean/low fat protein. Minimize high fiber/gassy foods, simple sugars, fatty foods and high calorie foods.*
- **Meal can be similar to last night's meal but in less quantities.*

Options: (mix and match as you choose to give yourself a satisfying meal)

Pasta (1-2 cups)
Pizza (thin crust, 2-3 small pieces)
Bread (whole grain)
Sweet potato (toppings on side)



Brown/dirty rice
Couscous/quinoa
Fish (grilled)
Chicken, turkey (grilled)
Salad (dressing on the side)
Omelet with bread
Wrap (avoid high calorie toppings and sauces)
Sub/Sandwich (avoid fatty meats and high calorie toppings and sauces)
Whole grain waffles and egg whites
Veggie burger sandwich
Tofu and Pita bread
20-24 ounces water

Race day morning!!!

**125-250 calories for a 1-3 hour race. Consume 1-2 hours prior to race.*

**250-350 calories for a 3-5 hour race. Consume 2-3 hours prior to race.*

**Prioritize complex carbohydrates and a little protein; minimize sugar and fatty or high calorie foods.*

**1 cup coffee w/ skim/soy milk (avoid sugar/creamers)*

**16-20 ounces of water before race start.*

Options:

Oatmeal (instant or reduced/low sugar packaged oatmeal)
Bread (whole grain)
Bagel (1/2 bagel, whole grain)
Waffle (whole grain)
Hard boiled or cooked eggs (2-3 whites for every egg yolk)
Granola bar (whole grain)
Raisins
Trail mix
Granola/Muesli
Peanut butter (natural/organic)
Jelly (low-sugar)
Banana (ripe)
Cream cheese (reduced fat)



15-minutes prior to race

8-16 ounces of sports drink (prioritize maltodextrin-rich drink) or if race lasts longer than an hour, consume 1 gel (prioritize maltodextrin-rich gel) with 6-8 ounces water

Time to race!!!

Race Nutrition:

- **Consume 5-8 ounces sport drink every 15 min.**

* If first run portion lasts less than 30 minutes, avoid sports drinks until the bike. Always stay hydrated with water.

* Prioritize maltodextrin-rich sports drinks for your sport bottles.

* Do not over concentrate your drinks on the bike!

* Never miss a race aid station for runs lasting more than 30 minutes.

- **Avoid solid food for races lasting less than 3 hours.**

* Focus on meeting caloric recommendations and staying hydrated by consuming sport drinks during a race. When not drinking a sport drink, use water to stay hydrated and for cooling.

- **180-240 calories per hour for a 90 minute – 3-hour race.**

* Consume 1 gel, every 20-30 minutes for races lasting more than 2 hours.

* Consume 5-8 ounces water w/ gel.