

Vic's Fit Tip November 2007

Why James is a Carbo Junkie!!

James, when I previewed your article on metabolism (elsewhere in this issue, could be worth reading), I remembered what a carbo junkie you are. (I confess, it's true, but not all carbs are bad for you. James) James claims to down about 12 – 15 servings of carbs a day during hard training. Let's put this into perspective. What do carbs do for your body? Why do so many diets say to avoid carbs? Why should you add protein to your diet?

Your daily nutritional intake should have the following goals: to control the number of calories taken in during the day so that your calorie intake equals your caloric output, and to control the insulin surges that lead to feelings of tiredness and lack of energy. Let's see what a minor change in your nutrition can do for you.

With my clients, I do a complete nutritional analysis, and we usually do make minor adjustments, usually I recommend adding quality protein. While James' carbohydrate intake would send most people into instant cardiac arrest, it is important to recognize that we count fruits, veggies and whole grains as carbs. In a recent article in one of the parenting magazines, it was claimed that you could be feeding your body (or your kids) 64 teaspoons of sugar every day! This is not good. If you read the daily menu described in the article, you could see their point. Sugars are hidden in peanut butter, juices, jams, jellies, etc. While we are pretty sure that most runners are taking better care of their body than that, you are likely getting more sugars than you should. Remember simple sugars are bad, complex carbohydrates and starches are much better.

As a runner, I am willing to bet that one of your biggest sources of simple sugars is your sport drink. Take a look at the label and you will find at least 14g of carbohydrates per 250 mL, and most drinks are much more than 250 mL. Multiply that by 4 for a one litre bottle, and you have 56g. That is way more sugar than you probably need. Instead of sport drinks, try having a lime. Citrus fruits have the carbohydrates you need but have the added benefits of vitamins, minerals and some fibre as well. Limes, in particular, are an excellent source of potassium, and, if you are running to lose weight, only 8 grams of carbohydrates. Stock up on limes, and leave the sugary sport drinks on the shelf!

Proteins are, in my opinion, a little short in everyone's diet. Please don't go out and load up the shopping cart with steaks and pork chops just yet though. First, let me tell you what our goals are when we add protein to our diet. One of the first nutritional changes I suggest for most of my clients is to add just a little more quality protein to the diet. The benefits are increased energy over a longer period of time. You will notice that your energy lasts longer and you don't have the tired feeling part way through the day. Having more energy through the day helps you get through your workout and not feel like you need a quick surge of energy to pick you up. Too often we will reach for sugars for the quick surge, and that leads to extra calories. Instead, try reaching for a fruit smoothie made with low-fat yogurt and low-fat milk with the addition of protein powder. By having protein with every meal, you will find that you have a faster recovery and you will

feel stronger throughout the rest of the day. This is because only protein can supply the amino acid building blocks you need in order to build and repair your cells, your muscles and connective tissues.

Carbohydrates give us quick energy, complex carbohydrates such as starches, give us longer lasting energy, but for real endurance opt for a bit more protein. The added benefit is that you will feel full for longer and will, therefore, not need to reach for the sugary snacks and drinks for a quick pick-me-up.