

# CYCLING

## EATING FOR YOUR SPORT

### YOUR SPORT:

Cycling is a sport to be enjoyed at any age, and can range from fun recreational rides to highly competitive amateur or professional races and events. When it comes to competitive cycling, most training and events revolve around road cycling, track cycling, mountain biking or BMX racing.

Most competitive cyclists tend to specialise in one type of riding for training and competition. However, some enjoy the variety and interest of training and competing in several types of cycling. This nutrition advice sheet is aimed for those who compete and train at recreational level. Elite competitors have different nutritional requirements than discussed below.

### ROAD CYCLING

Road cycling is an endurance sport with frequent changes in tempo where riders push themselves to full exertion in attacks, sprints and chases. Training includes many hours of cycling with interval speed sessions to enable riders to change pace when required.

Although road cycling is classed as an individual sport, riders are usually required to work as a team. Road races are either single day events, multi-stage races over several days, or tours, sometimes over 20 days long. Road race courses tend to be the distance from one landmark to another, or consist of one or multiple loops.

### TRACK CYCLING

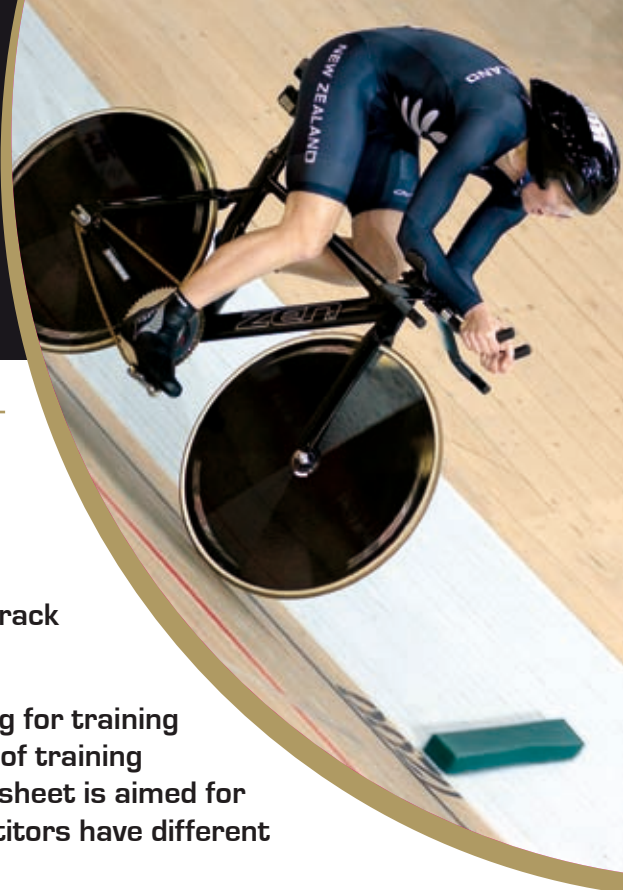
Track cycling races vary in time from 10 seconds to 45 minutes and as such, riders need both explosive power and endurance. Generally this means that track riders carry slightly more muscle than road cyclists. There are a huge number of events that are included in track cycling, some individual, and some group. Examples include time trials, points races, scratch races, the Madison and the Keirin Races.

### MOUNTAIN BIKING

Mountain biking commonly includes downhill, cross country and 4 cross races. Race times range from a speedy 2 minutes to an intense few hours.

### BMX RACING

BMX racing has similarities to motor-cross racing with riders racing a short circuit on a set track. Races typically last 40-60 seconds with heats, semi-finals and finals.



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## TRAINING DIET:

Cyclists need a balanced and varied diet daily, including:

- Fruits and vegetables – aim for variety of colours
- Breads and cereals – pasta, rice, bread, rolled oats, breakfast cereal, kumara, potatoes, noodles
- Low fat dairy products - including milk, yoghurt and cheese
- Lean meat, fish, chicken, eggs and other protein rich foods like tofu and pulses
- Healthy fats like vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and avocado

## CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrate is the main source of fuel needed by cyclists during training and competition. The amount of carbohydrate needed will depend on the intensity and duration of training and races. To optimise training, carbohydrate intake should be consumed over the day to provide fuel before and during workouts and recovery afterwards.

During the day and before training cyclists should aim to include low glycemic index (GI) carbohydrate rich foods as the base of most meals and snacks. These carbohydrate foods provide excellent fuel for training. This includes many oat based cereals, grainy bread, basmati rice and pasta.

To optimise recovery after training, athletes should consume carbohydrate rich foods during and/or immediately

after training to provide instant energy for training or help re-fuel the body quickly ready for the next training session.

This may include jellybeans, sports drinks, gels, bagels, wholemeal bread, white bread, baguette, brown rice, carrot, baked potato, watermelon, pretzels, rice bubbles or cornflakes.

## PROTEIN

Protein rich foods are also essential for good health and sporting performance.

Aim to include lean meats, skinless chicken, fish, eggs, low fat dairy products and/or vegetarian protein alternatives including tofu and pulses (e.g. chickpeas, kidney beans, lentils).

Having protein at each meal and some snacks will help you achieve an adequate protein intake. For optimal muscle recovery, it is ideal to include some protein as well as carbohydrate after training. Liquid breakfast drinks, low fat milk, yogurt, smoothies and creamed rice are great options at this time, particularly after a long training session.

## FATS

Including a small amount of healthy fat in your diet is essential for good health. Fat provides your body with an important range of vitamins and a small amount is needed to keep all the cells in your body working properly.

Aim to include small amounts of a variety of foods such as nuts, seeds

and avocado. Try to use unsaturated vegetable oils like canola, olive and rice bran in cooking rather than butter.

Despite some fats being healthy, others are unhealthy and can damage both short and long term health. These fats include saturated fat and trans fats and are found in animal products (white fat on meat, skin on chicken) and in some processed foods. Aim to keep these to a minimum.

All fat is high in energy (i.e. high in calories / kilojoules). As a lean physique is often important in cycling, for some people it will be important not only to keep unhealthy fats to a minimum, but also to include only small amounts of healthy fats. This often means consuming a tablespoon of nuts rather than a whole bag, and a slice or two of avocado not the whole thing!

## FRUIT & VEGETABLES

Fruits and vegetables are vital for cyclists as they provide essential vitamins and minerals as well as antioxidants to keep in top shape and health. Aim to include all colours (red, orange, purple, green and white) of fresh or frozen vegetables or fresh, frozen or dried fruits at most meals and snacks.

## HYDRATION

Good hydration strategies are imperative for good health and performance. Fluid needs are dependent on the length of the cycle and the environmental conditions on the day including the temperature and humidity (see hydration advise sheet for further details).





## A SAMPLE ONE DAY MEAL PLAN FOR A CYCLIST

### BREAKFAST:

3-4 hours before the ride:

- Hot oats or wholegrain cereal with fresh or canned fruit, and low fat milk

Top up 1 hour before the ride:

- Wholegrain toast with peanut butter

### DURING TRAINING:

If ride is longer than 60 minutes aim to consume carbohydrate rich foods e.g. sports drink, jellybeans or white roll with honey

### RECOVERY:

- After intense training consume some carbohydrates immediately e.g. sports drinks, jellybeans, pikelet, crumpet, baguette, white roll, ripe banana, watermelon or dates
- To improve recovery it is recommended to consume some protein about 20 minutes after finishing training e.g. pottle of yoghurt, glass of milk or home made recovery shake with low fat milk, yoghurt, fresh fruit and/or frozen berries
- Water

### LUNCH:

- Pasta salad with tuna and vegetables OR
- Wholegrain sandwich with lean meat and salad

### AFTERNOON TEA:

- Low fat yoghurt and a piece of fruit OR
- MILO with low fat milk and a piece of fruit OR
- Dried fruit and nuts

### DINNER:

- Baked new potato with skin on or a baked kumara, grilled steak and vegetables OR
- Chicken stir-fry with vegetables and basmati rice

### NUTRITIONIST'S NOTE

This meal is a general example only. It should be altered to suit individual energy requirements depending on age, gender and training load. For those who train at an elite level and/or twice or more a day additional pre training snacks and post training recovery food/drinks will be required. Contact a Sports Dietitian for guidance.

## NUTRITION PROFILE: RACHEL MERCER

### Why do you think nutrition is important for you?

I think nutrition is important for cycling because of the long and hard distances that we cover in training and racing and the fact that we need a lot of energy to be able to perform under these conditions. Good nutrition helps my body feel better and therefore helps my performance.

### What is your favourite training snack?

I generally don't eat a lot when I am training. If I had to choose I would say a banana because it's a good source of energy and easy to eat. But the one thing I do need is a good sports drink that tastes good and keeps me going.



### KEY FOODS FOR A CYCLIST'S PANTRY

- ✓ UNCLE TOBYS Rolled Oats
- ✓ Wholegrain bread
- ✓ Pasta, rice, couscous, MAGGI noodles
- ✓ Low fat crackers
- ✓ Canned fish
- ✓ Potatoes and kumara
- ✓ Creamed rice
- ✓ CARNATION Light & Creamy Evaporated Milk
- ✓ MILO Energy Food Drink
- ✓ Nuts and seeds
- ✓ Muesli bars

### KEY FOODS FOR A CYCLIST'S FRIDGE

- ✓ Frozen vegetables
- ✓ Frozen berries
- ✓ Low fat milk and yoghurt
- ✓ Hummus
- ✓ Cottage cheese
- ✓ Lean meat and chicken, fresh fish
- ✓ Fresh fruit and vegetables

### COACHES NUTRITION TIP

#### Eddie Bright - Coach and director for CycloSport women's racing team

Cyclists must fully realise the importance of appropriate recovery. My riders follow a comprehensive recovery programme after racing and competition. A recovery type drink immediately after exercise ensures that they are recovered and ready to race either later that day in a second stage or the next day. Additionally the riders use a night time recovery drink containing magnesium, zinc and protein which I believe greatly assists the muscle repair process.

### KEY COMPETITION/RACE FOODS

- ✓ Sports drink
- ✓ Cereal bar
- ✓ Flavoured milk drink for recovery
- ✓ Bananas



## COMPETITION DAY EATING

### BEFORE:

Aim to consume a familiar carbohydrate rich breakfast like hot oats, cereals or grainy toast 3-4 hours before the race. Be sure not to try anything new on race day as any change from your normal fibre intake may lead to tummy troubles before or during your race!

To promote optimal performance cyclists are advised to consume a carbohydrate snack 1 hour before the race e.g. a glass of fruit juice, a baked fruit bar or a piece of wholegrain toast thinly spread with peanut butter.

### DURING

Using a sports drink for hydration during a race will provide both carbohydrate and electrolytes including sodium (salt) which will be lost in sweat.

When racing for more than 60 minutes your carbohydrate stores (glycogen) are likely to be running low. Additional carbohydrate is therefore needed to provide fuel for the remainder of the race and help prevent fatigue. Aim for 30-60g carbohydrate/hour.

Sports drink and gels can be a useful

way to add extra carbohydrate during a race, but when cycling for over 2 or 3 hours it is often easier to include some solid carbohydrate as well as liquid forms. Suitable carbohydrate rich snacks include ripe bananas, jellybeans, white roll or white bread with jam or honey, baked fruit bars, dates, rice crackers, rice cakes and sports bars. Again, practise with these in training to see how well they suit you.

### AFTER

Helping your body to recover quickly after a race is essential, particularly if you have had multiple races in a day or are competing on consecutive days. Immediately after a race, have a carbohydrate snack. For example white sandwich with jam or honey, rice cakes, jellybeans, ripe banana, pikelets with honey, crumpets with jam. To improve recovery it can be helpful to include protein as a recovery snack after exercise e.g. yoghurt, creamed rice and low fat milk. Remember to recover any fluid losses that haven't been covered during the race.

Most importantly, have a plan before race day and try out nutrition strategies on your training rides. Endurance athletes should seek advice from a sports dietitian / accredited sports nutritionist to estimate how much fluid and carbohydrate you need for racing.

## SPECIAL ISSUES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR CYCLING

- Many cyclists strive to be lean in order to gain an advantage especially on hill climbs. To reduce body fat, you need to be taking in less energy (calories/kilojoules from food) each day than you are expending (calories/kilojoules burnt by everyday living and training). Fat loss should be slow and steady and dramatic food reduction should definitely be avoided.
- If you are aiming to lose body fat, firstly look at how much fat you are consuming in your diet, and aim to reduce it. Then, see if you can eliminate any unnecessary calories / kilojoules from foods that you may consume e.g. sports drinks when you're not training, picking when you're not hungry, eating more carbohydrate than you need during training, eating more protein (e.g. lean meat, chicken and fish) than you need. Monitor any changes you make to see if there are any changes in performance.
- Practise eating and drinking on your bike. It's also helpful to practise changing your drink bottles and mastering the art of receiving food items from support vehicles whilst riding before a race.

## TORTELLINI WITH CHICKEN & GOAT FETA

Serves 4

2 tsp MAGGI Garlic Stock Powder  
300g pkt fresh tortellini  
6 cups sliced vegetables e.g. carrot, red pepper, onion, courgette  
2 skinless chicken breast fillets, cooked and shredded  
1 pkt MAGGI Tasty Cheese Sauce Mix  
100g goat feta, crumbled  
chopped fresh herbs to garnish

- Add stock powder to a large pot of boiling water. Add tortellini and boil for 3-5 minutes. Add vegetables and boil for a further 4 minutes.
- Drain tortellini and vegetables, retaining 200mL of the liquid. Bring liquid to the boil, remove from heat, add sauce mix and whisk until smooth.
- Add chicken to tortellini and vegetables. Pour over sauce and mix gently to combine. Serve immediately with feta cheese crumbled over top. Garnish with chopped fresh herbs.

ANALYSIS	per serve
Energy (kJ)	1499
Carbohydrate (g)	31
Protein (g)	33
Fat (g)	12
Calcium, Fibre, Vitamin C	



This recipe is from the *Fit Food for Winners* cookbook. To order your copy, visit [www.nestle.co.nz](http://www.nestle.co.nz).