

# CARB-LOAD GUIDE

*for endurance athletes*

**RENEWAL**  
FITNESS & NUTRITION

# What is Carbohydrate Loading?

**Carbohydrate-loading** (aka carb loading) is a dietary protocol used to optimize endurance performance.

It helps reduce the time to fatigue in athletic events lasting longer than 90 minutes.

The goal of carb-loading is to increase your body's glycogen stores. Glycogen is the storage form of carbohydrate in the body, or your stored energy.

When glycogen levels are high, you essentially have more fuel to run further and faster before getting tired and running out of energy.



# How to Carb-Load

The recommended protocol for carb-loading is to **increase** carbohydrate intake and **reduce** training load for 1-3 days (usually 24-48 hours) prior to racing to optimize glycogen stores in the body.

Exact number of days and amount of carbs are based on individual needs, but the general guidelines are as follows:

- **Day 1 & 2:** Consume 5-12 g/kg/day (usually 8-12 grams if tolerated).
- **Day 3:** Competition Day - eat a low fiber (less than 5 grams), high-carb breakfast as tolerated prior to race to “top up” glycogen.

## How to determine carb needs:

1. Divide weight in pounds by 2.2 to get weight in kg (ex: 150 lbs / 2.2 = 68kg)
2. Multiply desired carbs by weight in kg (ex: 10g x 68kg = 680 g carbs per day).

# More Carb-Loading Tips

Keep the following in mind to optimize carb-loading:

- High performance athletes will need higher amounts of carbs (10-12 g/kg), while newer recreational athletes may be fine with lower amounts (5-10 g/kg).
- Use low-fiber carb sources. This is not the time to prioritize healthy foods like vegetables and whole grain. Instead, use foods like white rice, tortillas, white pasta, bread, white potatoes, crackers, jam, gummies, sports drinks, etc.
- Female athletes will need to increase overall calories more usual during this time as well to reap the benefits.
- Keep fat and protein lower than normal to ensure you can consume adequate carbs.
- Drink plenty of water for proper digestion and absorption of carbs.
- Eat more of your food in the morning so that your dinner is the smallest meal of the day, especially the day before your race.
- If you tend to have stomach issues when racing, minimize high-FODMAP carbohydrates like apples, onions, legumes, asparagus, wheat bread, and high-fructose corn syrup. To learn more about these foods and how to minimize stomach upset, check out my course, [\*A Runner's Guide to Reducing Gastrointestinal Symptoms\*](#).