

Cycling for Optimal Weight

The Cycling for Optimal Weight plan is a two part process....Cycling and Nutrition. Both of these areas need to be followed in order to achieve the results you desire.

Now I must also mention that weight training is another component that is highly recommended and is part of what we refer to as the Healthy Body Triad (Nutrition, Cardio, Weights). The “Cycling for Optimal Weight” plan does not include this component, but www.lovingthebike.com will be posting a weight training supplement to go along with this plan....watch for it.



Cycling

If you're wanting to use your cycling as a catalyst for weight loss or achieving your optimal weight you have to put in the right kind of time on the bike. Follow these guidelines and you've got the first part of the “Cycling for Optimal Weight” plan under control.

Distance - On a weekly basis, I want you to start cycling 60% to 75% more than you currently are. That means if you're averaging around 80 miles per week, you will start putting on 128 to 140. Yeah, that might seem like a big jump, but you can do it. Sure, it will eat up more time out of your week....but it will be so worth it.

Frequency - I don't want you packing on all these miles in one or two long haul rides. Frequency plays a part in the “Cycling for Optimal Weight” plan as well. You'll need to divide your miles between 4 to 6 rides each week. Never more, and only sometimes less if you really can't ride on certain days.

Intensity - Think about your level or exertion on a 1 to 10 scale. No matter how many days you get out riding each week, be sure to pedal at a “perceived level of exertion” of 7 or 8 for four of those rides. For the other 1 or 2 days of riding (depending if you're cycling 4, 5, or 6 days/week), you will pedal at a level 5 on your exertion gauge.

Time – Put in a minimum of 4 hours on the bike each week.

Time of Day - A lot of discussion goes on as to what the best time of day is to ride. The answer to that question is “the best time is whenever you’re able to get out there”. Yeah, whenever you’re able to fit it into your day...get out there and ride. If I had to add any advice on this one, I would say it’s always best to “pay yourself first” and get your fitness in before the time killers of the day get the best of you.

Keep at it – If a week goes by and you weren’t able to get in at least 4 hours or your weekly distance goal, don’t give up. Make it your goal the next week to achieve these results and keep at it. Once you’ve reached the goals I’ve set out for you, keep it there each week....or strive for more.



Now Lose Fat: Nutrition

Pro cyclists literally starve themselves. If you want to be the best, that’s what you do. That’s what I did. I cannot tell you how many nights you just go to bed hungry. –Lance Armstrong

How do you lose fat while training? For most non-pro endurance athletes, it’s not likely worth “starving” to lose weight. It’s certainly not worth it to me. But, in order to maintain or get to a healthy weight for wellness and cycling, you can take small, more comfortable steps to fat loss. Working with hundreds of clients with the same goals, I’ve found what I feel is a reasonable, effective plan for fat loss. No bedtime hunger pangs necessary. Here’s how:

Think of food as fuel.

Sounds easy enough, right? Actually, it’s far from easy to just think of food as fuel and even harder to put this thought into action. However, once an athlete accomplishes this he or she can make a lot of progress toward accomplishing fat loss goals. What are the practical steps to using food as fuel?

Eat according to your training schedule by following an Apex Nutrition Dynamic Eating Plan

or other reasonable eating plan that address both needs for everyday nutrition and training nutrition. Don't overeat on non-training days or under-eat on training days. All too often athletes eat the same foods each day, regardless of training. Then, they are often starving hours after a tough training session which usually leads to poor eating.

Here's how to set up a Dynamic Eating Plan:

Start by following the healthy foundational eating plan.

It includes 3 small meals and 2-3 snacks each day. It includes most of its calories at breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack – keeping dinner light and any desserts minimal. Each meal and snack contains a protein source. Healthy carbohydrates are added to meals (fruit, starchy vegetables, dairy, and small amounts of high-fiber whole grains). Lots of vegetables all day long.

On training days, add the training fuel recommended to your foundational eating plan. No matter your fat loss goals, if you are training in order to improve, don't skimp on training nutrition.

You can still lose fat while giving your body fuel for training. By following your Dynamic Eating Plan, you'll make sure to include pre-training fuel if you are not able to eat a meal within 3 hours of training, or a snack within 90 minutes of training. If you train first thing in the morning, you'll add an easy-to-digest pre-training snack (banana + 4 oz. juice + 4 oz. water). Then, add training fuel for any intense cardio over 60 minutes (under 60 minutes, you can use water). Always use a recovery snack, like those listed on your plan that includes carbohydrates and protein after training.

Day-to-Day: On days you don't train, don't replace your training nutrition.

Eat breakfast, mid-morning snack, lunch, mid-afternoon snack, and dinner.

Special circumstances:

The day before a "big" ride, eat as normal, but add a few extra calories and carbohydrates at dinner. By adding up to 30 extra grams of carbohydrates to your dinner you can make

sure your glycogen stores are replenished without going into a big ride feeling “heavy.” Try adding ¼ cup raisins, 1 banana, ½ yam, 1 cup cooked whole wheat pasta, or 2/3 cup cooked beans (if you tolerate them well).

Now, lose fat.

By continuing to train well with adequate training fuel, you can maintain your muscle mass and continue to get stronger.

Skimp smart.

This means cutting out the junk foods, sweets, and keeping evening intake light (lean protein and vegetables). Keep your foundational meals small and healthy, but still allow yourself adequate training nutrition. For daily nutrition, go for lean protein, lots of vegetables, fruits for carbohydrate sources, minimal white carbohydrates (refined grains and sugars), and minimal processed foods.

Reduce your intake of grains.

Grains don't provide nutrients that you can't get from other foods. And, clients are usually able to lose fat once they start minimizing grains. You can continue to include whole fruits, whole starchy vegetables, and beans at meals and snacks for carbohydrate sources. You can still include grains, if you'd like, at 1-2 meals per day, but reduce it from being the main food source of all 3 meals – and, control portions to just 1/3-1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, etc. Once you meet your fat percentage goals, you'll likely be able to add back in a few more grain sources, if you'd like, and still maintain your new physique.

Don't reward your training efforts with foods (beyond training nutrition).

After a tough, good, ride, it's very easy to over-eat for the next 24 to 48 hours. However, with a Dynamic Eating Plan, you've already fueled your training and recovered afterwards. You don't need or deserve a 1000 calorie dessert. Instead, rely on your training fuel for replenishment. If it was an extra-hard tour, add extra lean protein to your subsequent 1-3 meals after your recovery snack. And, make sure to rehydrate.

Keep it light at night.

Every dinner should include ½ plate of vegetables. The other ½ of the plate is all you

have left for the other foods. You need protein, so make sure to fill most of it with a healthy protein choice. Then, just a small amount of carbohydrates, preferably a whole, healthy starchy vegetable such as a sweet potato, corn on the cob, winter squash OR a serving of fruit.

Aside from training nutrition, don't drink calories.

No sugary Sports Drink when you're sitting around, no high sugar coffees, no soda. Limit Alcohol.

Realize that hunger is not a call to action.

Although I do not think you need to starve yourself or go to bed hungry, it's important to recognize the benefits of feeling hunger. When you've digested a meal properly, and your hormones are working correctly, you will feel hunger between meals if your meals are not too big. It is simply a sign of things going well. Instead of doing something about it, recognize it as a good sign and realize that you'll give your body more fuel at your next snack or meal. Allow yourself to go to bed satisfied, but not full. If you wake up in the morning hungry, great! You'll be ready for a healthy breakfast.

Prime your metabolism for fat loss.

While many people will tell you that metabolism is just the amount of calories your body burns each day, it's actually much more than that. Your calorie output, your digestive enzyme action, your hormonal response to foods, your storage of fat, and your breakdown of fat also make up your metabolism. And, you can change many of these metabolic responses with smart eating and supplementation.

Eat lean protein.

Protein is more metabolically active than carbohydrates and fats – we burn more protein calories during digestion than any other nutrient's calories. Protein keeps you full longer than carbs as it has a greater influence on hunger/satiety hormones. Lastly, protein requires less insulin, a metabolic hormone that promotes fat storage, than carbohydrates.

Eat healthy fats.

Healthy fats can promote abdominal leanness while many carbohydrates, especially

refined ones, promote abdominal fat storage. Healthy fats, like protein, require little insulin.

Minimize white carbs.

Minimize any white grains, such as refined cereals, breads and pastas. Minimize sugar. These refined carbohydrates will promote fat storage and slow fat loss because they require a great insulin response than fats and protein. They also wreak havoc on triglyceride, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels.

Supplement for a healthy metabolism:

Fish oil – aim for 2000 mg DHA and EPA in combination per day (this is different than mg fish oil)

Vitamin D – aim for 2000 IU vitamin D3 per day.

Calcium – make sure to get 1000 mg calcium per day through supplements or food.

Conjugated Linoleic Acid – try 3000-4000 mg CLA per day.

Medium Chain Triglycerides – when adding healthy fats to meals, try to use 1 Tbsp coconut oil at least 1 time per day.

Multivitamin – it's hard to get all the vitamins and minerals you need each day when eating on a calorie deficit for weight loss. So, a multivitamin can help. It will provide the B vitamins you need, and at least a foundational amount of others.

Fight inflammation.

I believe chronic inflammation in our bodies, from oxidative stress, inflammatory foods, cell breakdown, and even the sports we love, can contribute to disease, malfunctioning metabolism, and an inability to lose fat. To combat it, eat foods that are:

- Whole-food rather than processed.
- Low in saturated fats (fat from animal products...buy lean meat and/or remove fat)
- Low in trans-fats
- High in monounsaturated fats (think Mediterranean diet...olive oil, avocados, nuts, nut butter, etc.) For maximum health benefits, olive oil should not be heated – its makeup is altered with heat. Heated olive oil is not bad for you, but you won't get the same benefits. (<http://whfoods.org/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=132#summary>)

- High in DHA/EPA omega-3s (fatty fish)
- Highly anti-inflammatory such as ginger and garlic

A great tool for scoring foods based on inflammation, can be found at www.nutritiondata.com – type in a food...you'll get the nutrition label, glycemic index, and a inflammation score. Positive numbers are anti-inflammatory, negative ones are pro-inflammatory (kind of counter intuitive). You want to end up with a net score of 50 or better for the day.

Stay strong.

The biggest risk of trying to lose fat while pushing to improve as an athlete? Fatigue, injury, illness: basic overtraining stuff. You can avoid this with a Dynamic Eating Plan.

Don't skip meals, especially breakfast. The worst thing you can do when you're trying to lose fat is to begin skipping meals – skipping fuel. You need your meals and snacks. They can be light and healthy, but they still must be your fuel. Remember, too little calories equals too little energy.

Don't eliminate carbs. Aside from training nutrition, you can minimize them. In fact, you can go so far as to eliminate grains. However, you need to keep carbohydrate sources as a staple in your diet. Fruits, whole starchy vegetables and dairy are good choices. If you keep grains, make sure the portion is small and that they are whole.

You need adequate protein or you'll feel fatigued. I believe most protein recommendations for endurance athletes are too low. I recommend 0.65-0.75 grams of protein per pound you weigh if you are a meat eater, and 0.35-0.45 grams per pound if you are a vegetarian. The higher protein needs are especially important if you're cutting down on carbohydrates for fat loss.

You need adequate fat or you'll feel fatigued. At most meals, add a healthy fat. Your best choice? Try 1 Tbsp of organic coconut oil. Other great choices include 1 Tbsp olive oil, 2 Tbsp nuts or seeds, or 1/4 an avocado.

Put this into practice. Sample Eating Plans:

If you train 1st thing in the morning:

30 minutes out: Light pre-training snack: ex: ½ banana + 4 oz. juice mixed w/ 4-8 oz. water

During training: If ≤60 minutes, water or nothing. If >60 minutes, 16-32 oz. sports drink per hour training.

Breakfast as your recovery: Use your breakfast as a healthy recovery. It should include 40+ grams of carbs and 10+ grams of protein. Make sure to hydrate as well.

If more than 3 hours between the end of breakfast and beginning of lunch, add a small healthy mid-morning snack (can be low in carbs – ex: ¼ cup nuts)

Lunch: Need protein, carbs, healthy fat: Ex: Cottage Cheese mixed with yogurt and berries + 2 Tbsp sunflower seeds.

Mid-afternoon snack: Again, can be low carb. Try 1 hard-boiled egg.

Dinner: Vegetables and Protein: Try 6 oz. protein and 2 cups fresh salad. Dress with olive oil and vinegar plus salt and pepper.

If you training in the middle of the day:

Breakfast: Start with a healthy breakfast. Ex: Steel cut oats w/ 1 Tbsp nuts, milk, and a grapefruit.

Mid-morning snack: 60-90 minutes out: You need some carbs before training, try 1 small banana + 2 Tbsp nuts.

During training: If ≤60 minutes, water or nothing. If >60 minutes, 16-32 oz. sports drink per hour training.

Lunch as your recovery: Need protein, carbs, healthy fat: Ex: Cottage Cheese mixed with yogurt and berries + 2 Tbsp raisins and 2 Tbsp sunflower seeds.

Mid-afternoon snack: Can be low carb. Try 1 hard-boiled egg.

Dinner: Vegetables and Protein: Try 6 oz. protein and 2 cups fresh salad. Dress with olive oil and vinegar plus salt and pepper.

If you train in early evening:

Breakfast: Start with a healthy breakfast. Ex: Steel cut oats w/ 1 Tbsp nuts, milk, and a grapefruit.

Mid-morning snack: ¼ cup nuts or 1 hard-boiled egg.

Lunch: Need protein, carbs, healthy fat: Ex: Cottage Cheese mixed with yogurt and berries + 2 Tbsp sunflower seeds.

Mid-afternoon snack: 60-90 minutes out: You need a some carbs before training, try 1 small banana + 2 Tbsp nuts.

During training: If <=60 minutes, water or nothing. If >60 minutes, 16-32 oz. sports drink per hour training.

Dinner as your recovery. Vegetables and Protein: Try 6 oz. protein and 2 cups fresh salad. Add 2 Tbsp raisins salad. Dress with olive oil and vinegar plus salt and pepper. Add 1 cup milk on side.