



NUTRITION FOR THE YOUNG ATHLETE

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ABOUT US

The Sanremo Marathon Organizing Committee is responsible for organizing two major running events in Sanremo and Liguria: every December the SANREMO MARATHON – marathon | half marathon | 10K | 5K | Dog Run | Family Run – and every June the RUN FOR THE WHALES SANREMO – half marathon | 10K | Family Run.



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Eating properly means finding the right balance between personal dietary preferences and the body's needs in different situations, including those involving physical effort.

First of all, it is important to know that the nutrients the body needs, which we obtain from the foods we consume daily, are divided into:

- **MACRONUTRIENTS**
- **MICRONUTRIENTS**
- **WATER**



MACRONUTRIENTS

PROTEINS

They are the “building blocks” necessary for the development and maintenance of muscles, organs, and body systems.

LIPIDS OR FATS

Lipids are the main energy reserve of our body. It should also be remembered that many hormones and cell membranes are made up of lipids.



MACRONUTRIENTS

CARBOHYDRATES OR SUGARS

Carbohydrates are the best source of energy: the essential fuel for athletes! Prefer “slow-release” carbohydrates, better known as low glycemic index, before a race (e.g., al dente pasta or toasted bread with a thin layer of butter and jam) and “fast-release” carbohydrates such as white sugar (sucrose) or honey during and immediately after performance.





MICRONUTRIENTS

VITAMINS AND MINERALS (The regulators...)

They regulate the chemical reactions that occur in the body. Minerals support and complement vitamins in their regulatory and anti-stress functions. Some of them (e.g., calcium for bones) are essential for tissue formation in our body.



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WATER



Water is the fundamental nutrient. Our body is mainly composed of water, in varying percentages depending on age, sex, and body composition. For athletes, it is essential to pay attention not only to what to eat but also to what, how much, and when to drink.



WHERE CAN WE GET NUTRIENTS?

- **Meat, Fish, Eggs** – sources of high-quality protein and iron. Fish, especially oily fish like anchovies, is rich in essential fats (omega-3).
- **Milk and Dairy Products** – provide high-quality protein and calcium.
- **Cereals and Tubers (e.g., potatoes)** – sources of carbohydrates; preferably unrefined, whole grains.
- **Legumes** – good sources of protein (though less “noble” than animal-based foods), as well as carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals.
- **Fats for seasoning** – sources of lipids; extra virgin olive oil is preferred for its health-promoting properties.
- **Vegetables and Fruits** – both are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and water.

WHERE CAN WE GET NUTRIENTS?

A balanced diet should provide a proper distribution of calories throughout the day:

- **BREAKFAST: 15–20%**
- **SNACK: 5%**
- **LUNCH: 35–40%**
- **SNACK: 5%**
- **DINNER: 30–35%**



BREAKFAST

Upon waking, the body needs an energy boost. An adequate breakfast should include:

- Foods providing protein, depending on taste: milk, yogurt, cheese (preferably low-fat such as ricotta), cooked ham, eggs, or bresaola;
- Foods providing carbohydrates: wholemeal bread, wholemeal rusks, fruit, jam, honey.
- Optional additions: dark chocolate (at least 80% cocoa), unsweetened cocoa powder, and oily nuts such as walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, etc.



SNACKS



Mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks are important to give the body a proper energy boost. Suitable options include seasonal fresh fruit or juice, oily nuts (e.g., walnuts), yogurt or a glass of milk, and toast (made with wholemeal bread).



LUNCH AND DINNER

Even for athletes, lunch and dinner should consist of:

- A carbohydrate-based dish (wholemeal pasta or rice, barley, spelt, etc.)
- An appropriate portion of protein from lean meats (white or red), fish, or eggs
- A generous portion of seasonal vegetables
- Proper seasoning: extra virgin olive oil is best for lipid composition
- Optional: a serving of fresh seasonal fruit and/or oily nuts such as walnuts or almonds
- Drink: water is always preferred



NUTRITION AND SPORT

Meals should be adapted according to the timing of physical activity. There is no "standard menu" for everyone.

BEFORE TRAINING/RACE:

- At least 2–3 hours before → easily digestible meals, rich in low-GI carbohydrates
- 1–1.5 hours before → light snack (rusks with honey + yogurt)

AFTER ACTIVITY:

- Within 30 minutes: carbohydrate + protein combo (smoothie, milk and fruit, yogurt with honey and cereals)

POST-RACE DINNER:

- Can be "free" but always balanced (e.g., complete soup + light main course)



HYDRATION

Hydration is one of the most neglected yet important factors. Even mild dehydration reduces performance.

TIPS:

- Drink before, during, and after activity
- Monitor urine color: dark urine indicates dehydration
- Replenish 1–1.5x the weight lost in fluids

DURING INTENSE SPORT:

- Use sports drinks → water + sugars + salts (e.g., maltodextrins + sodium + potassium)



HOW TO COOK FOOD

Cooking affects nutritional value. Avoid frying and unnecessary fats.

Recommended methods:

- Steaming, grilling, baking, baking in parchment
- Limit added fats during cooking





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Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus+ KA2 Small-Scale Cooperation Project, implemented under the coordination of the Sanremo Marathon Committee (ITALY),
in partnership with Cosmos Youth (TURKEY).