



### Fuel for "Walk the Line"

A 25 km walk or run is quite an endurance event and requires substantial training for most people. A key part of training is looking after your nutrition. What you eat on day-to-day basis will play a role in your muscle strength and endurance and on your energy levels for the big event. What you eat and drink on the day can also make the difference between finishing well and dropping out. Luckily, this walk is in the evening so you don't have to worry too much about dehydrating in hot sunshine (I know, it is more likely to rain, it being Ireland and all...). But, taking care of fluid and food coming up to the walk and on the day can make this a more enjoyable and successful event for you.

### Training

#### Carbs, carbs, carbs

It is unlikely that you have gotten this close to the walk without hearing something about how important carbs are for exercise and training. Your muscles rely on glycogen (a type of carbohydrate) for most of their energy and it is glycogen that will be the main fuel used on your walk. Your body makes glycogen from the carbs you eat, so you need to make sure you are eating a high carb diet while training. Don't be tempted to go on a high protein diet. These are often recommended but will increase your chances of dehydration and can leave muscles sore and stiff.

65-70% of what you eat should be carbs. For heavy training and endurance exercise you need to be getting about 7g of carbs per kg of body weight. Just multiply your weight in kg by 7 or if you still work in pounds it is 3.2g of carbs per pound. High carb foods include pasta, cereals, rice, potatoes, bread, fruit and vegetables and dairy foods. You also need to replace carbs immediately after exercise as this helps muscle recovery and boosts glycogen levels for your next training session or event. A guide to the amount of carbs in portions of foods is below. A handy measure is a 200ml cup (the size you get from water coolers).

Go for:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 15g carbs:    | 200ml cup cooked pasta<br>200ml cup cooked rice<br>1 slice bread<br>1 piece of fruit<br>150mls fruit juice |
| 12g carbs:    | 200mls low fat milk<br>50g cheese  |
| 5g carbs:     | 200ml cup leafy veg<br>½ cup other veg   |
| 15-20g carbs: | ½ cup cooked beans or lentils  |



### **Protein**

Protein is needed to build and tone muscle but you don't need huge amounts. For endurance events you do need a little more protein when training but don't spend a fortune on protein drinks. Eating protein rich foods will give you all the protein you need and will also give you iron, zinc and other minerals.

To estimate how much protein you need multiply your weight in kg by 1.3 or pounds by 0.6. Remember this is quite a lot more than normal so this should only be done when you are training! If you stop training, go back to normal amounts. Some guidelines on the amounts of protein in common foods are below:

21g protein: 3oz/75g lean meat/poultry/fish

7g protein: 1 whole egg/2 egg whites/ ½ cup cooked beans or lentils/4oz tofu

### **Fluid**

It is important to keep well hydrated during training. Ideally you need to have 100-150mls fluid every 15-20 minutes you are active. Get used to doing this while you are training so it is not something new when you get to the event. You can use water or isotonic drinks.

### **On the day/night**

#### **Carbs**

The night before the event, have a meal that is high in carbohydrates with some lean meat e.g. pasta with bolognese/cod, baked potatoes and salad/low fat chicken curry and rice. On the day, eat a high carbohydrate meal 2-3 hours before the event. If you find it hard to exercise with a lot of food, try eating 5 hours before and then topping up with a high carb snack 1 hour before.

You also need to take 30-60g of carbs for every hour during the walk. That's 600-1000mls isotonic drinks/1-1.5 gel packs/dried fruit. Again, practice this during training to see what works best for you.

#### **Fluid**

Becoming dehydrated will slow you down and make it less likely that you'll finish. You need to drink plenty of fluids beforehand. Try to drink 400-500mls about 2-3 hours before you start and another 250mls 10-20 minutes before starting. Top up your fluid throughout the walk. You need roughly, 100-150mls every 15 minutes or so. Use water stops as a trigger to drink, although don't overdo it! If you are taking isotonic drinks for carbs, they should cover your fluids as well.



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Two good homemade sports drinks are:

200mls fruit cordial  
1000mls water  
pinch of salt

500mls unsweetened fruit juice  
500mls water  
pinch of salt

The Irish Nutrition and Dietetic Institute has an excellent fact sheet on training for endurance events: see [www.indi.ie](http://www.indi.ie). If you want individual advice, contact the dietitians in the Sports Nutrition Interest Group of the INDI in the 'find a dietitian' section of the INDI website.

**Good luck!**

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Sarah Keogh, MSc., BSc., M.I.N.D.I., graduated from Trinity College, Dublin in 1996 with a degree in Human Nutrition and Dietetics. She has worked in hospitals both in Ireland and the UK and was Head of the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics at the Bon Secours Hospital in Glasnevin for four years. Sarah runs a private practice at the well-known [Albany Clinic](#) in Dublin as well as a food and nutrition consultancy called Eatwell ([www.eatwell.ie](http://www.eatwell.ie)).

She is the nutrition consultant to several organisations and clients include [SuperValu](#), [Bord Iascaigh Mhara](#) and [SafeFood](#), the Food Safety Promotion Board. Sarah also writes for [Easyfood](#) and [Easyhealth](#) Magazines, is an outstanding public speaker on nutrition and is regularly quoted in the media on nutritional issues. A recognized expert in her field, Sarah has spoken at national and local venues across the country, and has appeared in print, radio and broadcast media sources commenting on nutrition, children's health, obesity and nutrition policy.



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