

# Nutrition

(Note: The following information was collected from various sources and considered reliable. We recommend that athletes always consult their parents or a healthcare professional)

- Distance running is not easy, and a good diet is of the utmost importance in order for athletes to stay healthy and perform to their full potential!
- It is EXTREMELY important for runners to take in sufficient protein, calcium (dairy products), carbohydrates, Iron, Vitamin D, and Vitamin C.
- Vitamin supplements are a good way to ensure that runners are getting enough of these important nutrients.
- There are three main things to remember: 1) water (lots of it) 2) nutritious foods and vitamins 3) rest (8-9 hours of sleep per night). Prior to races and workouts, foods which are EASY to digest, especially carbohydrates, are a runner's best friend. After workouts, foods and sports drinks containing carbohydrates and protein will speed up recovery. Check out [www.schoolrack.com/shhscrosscountry](http://www.schoolrack.com/shhscrosscountry) for more info on nutrition.

## Pre-Race Nutrition Tips

- For morning races, athletes should ALWAYS eat something for breakfast! Plan on eating at least two hours before a race. Here are some great race day breakfast ideas:
- Toast/bagel topped with fruit spread
- A sportsbar/granola bar
- Oatmeal or Cereal
- Banana
- Don't forget to drink water
- For afternoon races, since athletes will be departing from SHHS they should prepare a lunch, snacks, and water for the day. Afternoon races pose a different strategy. Beginning in the morning, athletes should eat a typical day's breakfast. Assuming lunch in school around 12pm, runners should try to eat an easily digested meal - perhaps a turkey or peanut butter and jelly sandwich and a banana. Assuming a 4pm race start, runners can consume a sportsbar about 1- 1 ½ hrs. before the race. Avoid fat and protein before a race. Athletes should drink plenty of water throughout the day!

## Post-Race Tips

- The sooner an athlete takes in a combination of carbohydrates and protein after the race, the better their recovery (glycogen resynthesis) for the next workout or race.

## Iron Deficiency and Anemia

According to various studies and the *North American Journal of Sports Physical Therapy*, endurance athletes, especially female distance runners, have been identified as being at risk for developing iron deficiency. While iron deficiency is treatable, early diagnosis may be delayed if an adequate medical history and evaluation is not conducted. The formation of hemoglobin and the body's subsequent ability to transport oxygen from the lungs to the tissues will be impaired in the athlete who is iron deficient.

### ***Symptoms and signs:***

In the first stages of iron deficiency, the athlete's performance begins to decline. Distance runners with low iron levels may experience the following symptoms:

- abnormal exhaustion

- slow recovery
- heavy legs
- lack of energy/motivation
- declining performance
- nausea
- ice craving

### ***How is iron deficiency detected?***

If there is a health concern, contact your physician. Your healthcare provider will conduct blood tests to screen for iron deficiency. If your healthcare provider determines that the iron deficiency is due to a diet low in iron, you might be told to eat more iron-rich foods. Your health care provider may also prescribe an iron supplement. Your healthcare provider's recommendations will be specific to your needs.

### ***What can I do to prevent iron deficiency?***

In general, you can eat a healthful diet that includes good sources of iron. A healthful diet includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat free or nonfat milk and milk products, lean meats, fish, dry beans, eggs, nuts, and is low in saturated fat, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars. A list of foods high in iron:

- Meat (Turkey, Chicken, Red meat, Liver, etc)
- Eggs
- Dark, leafy greens (spinach, collards)
- Dried fruit (prunes, raisins)
- Iron-enriched cereals and grains (check the labels)
- Seafood (oysters, clams, scallops, shrimp)
- Beans, lentils, chick peas and soybeans
- Artichokes

Here's a tip: If you eat iron-rich foods along with foods that provide plenty of vitamin C, your body can better absorb the iron.