

Life of an athlete



Athletes come in all shapes and sizes, and they follow different training programs. What they eat, and when, depends on their body size, their training program and the sport they play.

What an athlete eats

For example, a male marathon runner does not have much body fat, but needs to eat plenty of **carbohydrates** because his daily training program demands a lot of sustained energy. He needs carbohydrates like pasta and bread to fuel his muscles. He also needs to drink a lot of fluids while training and competing.

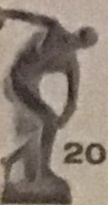
A female gymnast does not require such high energy foods because her training program has short bursts of intensely energetic work. She will train for many hours a day, but most of this time she will work on developing her skill, flexibility and strength. She will eat nutritious foods that are low in fat, such as grilled lean meat, boiled potatoes, vegetables and low-fat yoghurt.

A cyclist's day

In training for the Olympics, road cyclist Tracey Gaudry rides for more than 100 kilometres a day, 11 months of the year. Her day begins at 5.30 a.m. with a breakfast of cornflakes, muesli and fruit. She rides for four hours or so, and takes four sports bars with her to eat along the way. After her ride, she replaces the muscle fuel lost through this exercise by drinking a powdered **protein** and carbohydrate **supplement** with soy milk and honey. Then, an hour later Tracey has lunch – a salad sandwich or

Daniel Kowalski: In training

When training for the Olympics, swimmers have little time for anything but eating, swimming and sleeping. For example, Daniel Kowalski is up at 4.20 a.m. and in bed by 8.30 p.m. He swims about 90 kilometres a week, in two or three sessions a day. Sunday is his only day off. He also does **endurance** training, which means Daniel swims 9000 metres in the morning and 9000 metres in the afternoon. Every second day, he does weight training or aerobics.





Tracey Gaudry is a road cyclist. She rides for more than 100 kilometres a day, 11 months of the year.

steamed rice and vegetables. In the afternoon, she may have a treat, such as a chocolate biscuit.

Tracey must eat dinner no later than 7.30 p.m. so her body can digest the food before training the next morning. For dinner, she eats vegetables and lots of carbohydrates – big servings of rice, noodles, potatoes or pasta and two slices of bread. About four nights a week, she adds red meat or chicken to her meal. During the Games, Tracey will eat bigger breakfasts and more carbohydrate snacks during the day, but she will cut out meat altogether because it makes her feel sluggish. And there will be no more afternoon treats – any extra fat could slow her down.

Training the mind

Teams of professionals work with athletes to make sure they are physically prepared for an event like the Olympic Games. These people include coaches, sports nutritionists and physiotherapists.

There are also people who work with athletes to make sure they are *mentally* prepared for the stresses of competition. Sports psychologists help athletes to improve their performance by working on their mental skills – the way they think about themselves and their sporting performance.