**Fuel Your Body for a Marathon: A Diet Plan**

* ***Dietary tips from a BJU clinical dietitian***

Running a marathon is a serious undertaking that requires lots of training and copious amounts of energy. To get all that energy, you’ll need to turn to food. Start eating right a week before the race and you’ll optimize your energy stores for the big day. Here, Beijing United Family Hospital (BJU) Clinical Dietitian Lynn Zhang walks you through the ideal diet plan to help fuel you through the race.

**Before race day**

One week before the race, you need a diet plan that allows lots of carbs, a moderate amount of protein, and low amounts of fat, with proper hydration all the while. An efficient carb-loading plan can help you perform better in the race and smash your personal best. If you already eat a varied diet, it will not be necessary for you to supplement any particular micronutrient as you train. Female athletes, however, may benefit from upping their consumption of iron- and calcium-rich foods in the lead-up to race day.

**The day of**

On the big day, you’ll perform better and have a lower chance of suffering a tummy upset if you eat the final bite of your last big meal three or four hours before the starting gun goes off. Choose a meal that’s low in fiber and easy to digest. For ideas and recommendations, please see below. Have a high-carb snack (such as some chocolate or an energy bar) or 150-300 ml of a sports beverage 30-60 minutes before the race starts to get a stock of some quick energy for your body to use over the hours you’ll be running.

* **High-carb meal ideas**

A high-carb food has 5-9 g of carbs per kilo. It’s best to avoid refined sugars and honey and focus instead on complex carbs. Go for a slice of bread; a quarter of a bagel; half a bowl of rice, noodles, or pasta; a medium-sized potato; half a banana; a small apple; 300 ml of milk; or 200 ml of unsweetened yogurt.

* **Moderate protein meal ideas**

This means any food that has 1.3-1.8 g of protein per kilo of food. Your best bet is a low-fat, moderate protein snack or meal, such as 40 g of meat, fish, or shrimp; half a bowl of cooked beans or peas; one and a half eggs; 300 ml of milk; 200 ml of unsweetened yogurt; or 50 g of nuts.

* **Low-fat meal ideas**

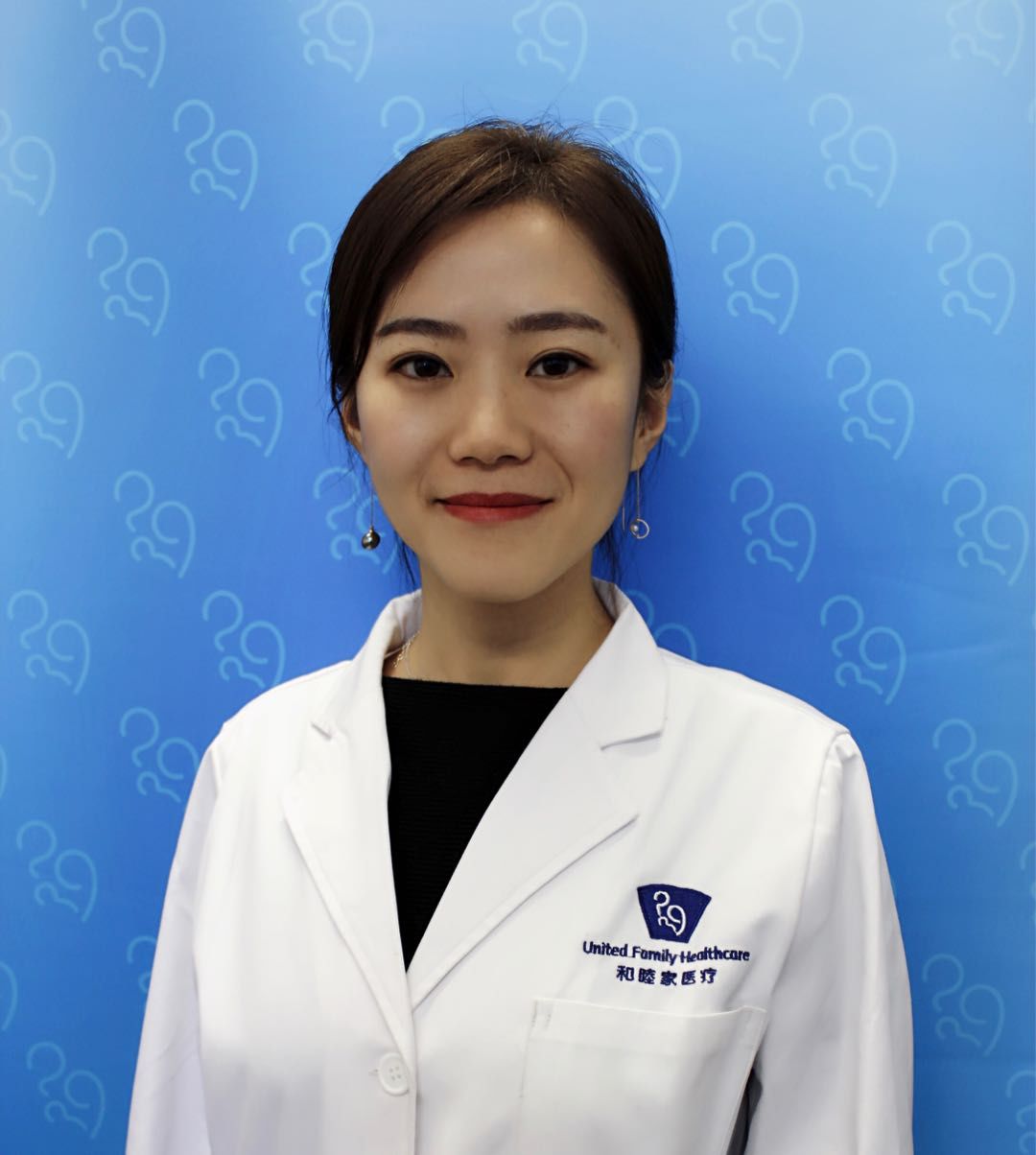
When it comes to low-fat diet recommendations, the lower the fat content, the better! When you do eat fat, choose plant-based fats like olive oil, nuts, canola oil, or avocados.

**During the run**

Replenishing your fluids and energy stores as you run is vital because you will use both of these up during the race. I recommend sipping 150-300 ml of water or a sports drink every 15-20 minutes. Sports drinks contain a moderate amount of sugar, sodium, potassium, and other essential electrolytes that you will lose as you sweat and pant your way around the race course. Small amounts of sugary snacks, such as energy bars, chocolate, bananas, raisins, and cookies, are also excellent energy sources to take during the race.

**Once you pass the finish line**

Thirty minutes after the race, you may have a small, low-fiber meal that contains easy-to-digest and -absorb carbs and proteins. This will help with energy supplementation. Good choices would be a tuna or turkey breast sandwich, yogurt with fruits, or trail mix with nuts. A bigger and more varied meal should be eaten two to six hours after completing the race. Remember to choose foods that are moderate in carbs but high in protein to restore and repair the muscles you used on the race course. Proper hydration is always essential, but opt for unsweetened fluids for the time being.



Lynn Zhang is BJU's American-trained Clinical Dietitian. She speaks English and Mandarin. To make an appointment with her, please call the BJU Service Center at 4008-919191.

For more information, please visit our website : <http://beijing.ufh.com.cn/department_spe/cardiovascular-center?lang=en>

Beijing United Family Hospital

No. 2, Jiangtai Road, Chaoyang District

For Appointment: 4008 919191

For 24 x 7 Emergency: 5927 7120

