



KNOWLEDGE CENTRE | GUIDE 08

Fuelling and Hydration for Long Rides, Runs and Walks

Practical preparation for sustained energy, hydration and unexpected delays.

PREPARE FOR THE WHOLE OUTING

Food and fluid needs change with duration, effort, weather, terrain and the individual. Start prepared, use familiar choices, carry enough for the plan and keep a sensible reserve for delays.

IN THIS GUIDE

Planning needs • Before activity • Eating and drinking during activity • Water containers • Emergency reserves • Warning signs • Final checklist

Free, ungated practical guidance from SLIPSTREAM®

Fuel the Outing. Carry the Essentials. Stay Comfortable.

Start with the outing, not a fixed formula

There is no single food or fluid plan that suits every person or every activity. A gentle walk in cool weather is different from a hard run, a long ride or an exposed route with no reliable refill point.

Five questions before you pack

✓	DURATION: How long do I expect to be moving, including planned stops?
✓	EFFORT: Will the pace be comfortable, sustained, hard or stop-start?
✓	CONDITIONS: Will heat, cold, wind, humidity or altitude change my needs?
✓	ACCESS: Are water and food genuinely available on the route, or must I carry everything?
✓	DELAY: What extra reserve is sensible if I slow down, miss a turn or have a mechanical problem?

Match preparation to the situation

OUTING	LIKELY EMPHASIS	PLANNING PRIORITY
Short and easy	Normal meals and everyday hydration	Water access, weather and a small backup
Longer or harder	Regular fluid and usable carbohydrate	Tested food, accessible water and timing
Hot or exposed	Greater fluid demand and heat management	Extra water, shade options and a shorter escape route
Remote or uncertain	Self-sufficiency and delay margin	Extra food and water plus emergency essentials

PLAN FROM EXPERIENCE

Use shorter training outings to learn what you comfortably tolerate, how much you tend to drink and which foods are easy to carry, open, chew and digest.

Before you leave: begin normally prepared

Good preparation begins with your usual balanced eating and drinking pattern. Avoid trying to correct poor preparation by eating a very large meal or drinking excessive amounts immediately before departure.

Food before activity

- Choose familiar food that you know sits comfortably during movement.
- For a longer or harder outing, include a carbohydrate-containing meal or snack appropriate to your normal routine.
- The British Dietetic Association suggests a low-fat, higher-carbohydrate snack or light meal around two to three hours before exercise as a useful general approach.
- If eating closer to departure, keep the portion modest and particularly familiar.
- Do not introduce a new gel, bar, drink, supplement or unfamiliar food on an important outing.

Fluids before activity

✓	Drink regularly through the day rather than relying on one large last-minute drink.
✓	Water is an appropriate choice for most everyday activity.
✓	Consider recent weather, illness, alcohol intake and previous activity when assessing readiness.
✓	Pale straw-coloured urine can be a useful general hydration check, although medicines, supplements and some foods can affect colour.

INDIVIDUAL ADVICE MATTERS

People with diabetes, kidney or heart conditions, swallowing difficulties, fluid restrictions, pregnancy-related concerns, or medicines affecting fluid balance should follow advice from their healthcare team rather than a general guide.

During the outing: little, often and familiar

Keep food and drink accessible enough to use before you become depleted or very thirsty. Small, regular amounts are often easier to tolerate than infrequent large intakes.

Drinking during activity

- Use weather, duration, effort, thirst and your previous experience to guide a sensible personal plan.
- Water is the best choice during and after most activities; strenuous or prolonged activity may sometimes justify a suitable sports drink.
- Drink regularly, but do not force excessive amounts. Both too little and too much fluid can be harmful.
- Increase planning margins in warm weather, when climbing, or where reliable refills are limited.
- Do not assume water from streams, lakes or outdoor taps is safe unless it is clearly identified or properly treated.

Eating during longer activity

CHOICE	PRACTICAL EXAMPLES	CHECK
Everyday portable food	Banana, sandwich, dried fruit or a familiar cereal bar	Easy to carry, open and digest
Sports-specific option	Gel, chew, drink or formulated bar	Tested in training and used as directed
Emergency reserve	Compact energy bar or other durable snack	Kept back for delay or unexpected need

LONGER, HARDER EFFORT

For hard exercise lasting longer than about an hour, carbohydrate during activity can support performance. The appropriate amount and format vary, so practise the complete plan before an event and seek qualified sports-nutrition advice for ambitious targets.

Carry water safely and keep a reserve

Choose a container by function: capacity, cleanliness, leak resistance, accessibility, weight and the ability to refill safely. The container does not replace the need to calculate what the outing may require.

Common water-carrying options

OPTION	USEFUL FEATURES	POINTS TO CHECK
Reusable aluminium bottle	Durable, refillable and easy to monitor	Clean after use; follow maker guidance for lining, cap and permitted drinks
Sealed bottled water	Convenient for events, support points and emergency stock	Check seal and date; protect from heat and dispose of or recycle responsibly
Soft flask or bladder	Accessible while moving and efficient in a pack	Inspect, wash and dry the tube, valve and reservoir thoroughly

How much should you carry?

✓	Estimate the planned time, effort and weather using your experience from comparable outings.
✓	Confirm whether refill points will be open, working and safe; do not rely on an uncertain source.
✓	Add a sensible reserve for delays, route changes or another participant who runs short.
✓	Balance sufficient capacity against the weight you can carry safely and comfortably.
✓	For organised events, read the rules and identify where water is supplied before deciding what to carry.

CHOOSE BY FUNCTION

A reusable aluminium bottle or sealed bottled-water option can make preparation more convenient. Whichever format you choose, carry enough safe drinking water for the planned outing and a reasonable unexpected delay.

Your one-minute fuelling and hydration check

✓	PLAN: Have I considered duration, effort, weather, terrain and reliable refill points?
✓	BEFORE: Have I eaten and drunk normally, using familiar choices?
✓	WATER: Am I carrying enough for the plan plus a sensible reserve?
✓	FOOD: Is my normal fuel accessible, easy to use and tested during activity?
✓	EMERGENCY: Have I kept back a compact energy bar or other durable snack?
✓	CONTAINER: Is my bottle, flask or bladder clean, secure, leak-free and easy to reach?
✓	ROUTE: Does someone know my route, start time and expected return time?
✓	BACKUP: Do I have my phone, navigation, essential medication and appropriate emergency kit?

Respond to warning signs

Thirst, dark strong-smelling urine, urinating less often, headache, dizziness, unusual tiredness and a dry mouth can indicate dehydration. Tiredness, dizziness, headache, nausea, cramps, excessive sweating or marked thirst may also occur with heat exhaustion. Stop safely, cool down and take appropriate fluids. Confusion, seizure or loss of consciousness can indicate heatstroke and requires emergency help.

Trusted resources

- [British Dietetic Association - fluid and hydration](#) • [BDA - sport and exercise nutrition](#)
- [NHS - dehydration](#) • [NHS - heat exhaustion and heatstroke](#)
- [Mountain Rescue England and Wales - staying safe](#)

THE SIMPLE PRINCIPLE

Start prepared. Use familiar food and drink. Carry enough safe water for the outing and a reasonable delay. Keep an emergency snack in reserve. Respond early when something feels wrong.

SLIPSTREAM® KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Practical guidance for active living - education first, products second.

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Prepared August 2026. This guide provides general educational information and does not replace individual medical or dietary advice. People with a health condition, prescribed fluid restriction, food allergy or specific performance goal should seek appropriate professional guidance.