

# Stretching, Nutrition, & Hydration

## Stretching

Stretching is extremely important in keeping your muscles flexible and injury free. Keep the following in mind when stretching:

- Make sure you warm up first—walk in place for three to five minutes. It is always better to stretch warmed-up muscles.
- Stretch muscles equally on both sides of your body. Don't focus your attention on one side or the other.
- Don't bounce while stretching. Take it slow and steady. Bouncing can cause injury to your muscles.
- Be sure to stretch your entire body—not just your legs. Include your arms, back, hips, shoulders, and neck.
- Stretch every time you get off your bike during a ride. Give yourself an extra five minutes of stretch time at each rest stop.
- Don't forget to stretch after you ride and before getting in the car for a long drive home. Stretch at home before going to bed. Your muscles will thank you the next morning.
- Visit [diabetes.org/tour](https://diabetes.org/tour) for a diagram of cycling stretches.

## Nutrition

It's important that your body gets the quality fuel it needs to perform the extra work of cycling. Complex carbohydrates are the best source of fuel for your muscles—pasta, beans, rice, whole grains, fruits, and veggies. Consult with your physician or registered dietitian for advice.

## Hydration

Fluids are crucial to your performance and sense of well-being. You've heard it before—drink, drink, drink! But it is amazing how few cyclists heed this advice. They forget to drink because of the excitement of the ride, and then they wilt before the end.

Dehydration is a common problem among cyclists, especially in warm weather, and can lead to serious problems. To prevent this, you must drink plenty of fluids while you ride. Keep the following in mind:

- Pre-hydrate. Drink a bottle of water and/or 16 ounces of sports drink an hour before the ride. If you need that cup of coffee to wake up be sure to drink water to balance the dehydrating effects of caffeinated beverages.
- Consume at least one 28-ounce bottle of fluid per hour. How much you need depends on body size, temperature, intensity of the ride, etc. Experience will help you judge your fluid needs.
- Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. Your body begins to lack fluid before you feel the sensation of thirst.
- Drink during the ride. Make it a habit to reach for your bottle every 15 minutes and take a couple of big swallows. Alternate drinking water and sports drink.
- Restore sodium levels. The salt you sweat out needs to be replaced. Your sports drink should contain at least 100mg of sodium per 8 ounces (check the label).

