bike tour nutrition guide

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REANIMATOR 2024 NEW MEXICO BIKE TOUR

Hi, all! My name is Hannah, and I'm a graduate from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, (with an emphasis on hormone health!). I've put together this information to outline some key nutrition-based elements to help you make the most of your REANIMATOR journey!

We'll dive into the importance of getting your macros and your micros (nutrients), keeping your blood sugar stable, making sure your gut is happy and healthy, and an overview of nourishing your body along the way. I've also included some ideas/recipes to prep for your trip (if you feel so inclined).

Please keep in mind-- we're all unique individuals with unique nutritional needs. No two members on tour will have the same energy requirements/expenditure, nor will their bodies react to all foods in the same way. This guide is merely a resource to be used as helpful tactics/suggestions for your excursion.

I'll also be available as a resource, both before and during your bike tour. Feel free to email me at hannjleo@gmail.com for questions you might have concerning your nutrition for the trip.

Blood Sugar 101

- Blood sugar, which is also known as blood glucose, is the amount of sugar in your blood at any given time. It's produced when the body breaks down carbohydrates.

- Ultimately, any change in diet, activity levels, and environment (temperature, altitude, etc.) can affect blood glucose levels. That being said, the REanimator bike tour is a perfect time to keep this in mind!

- Blood sugar balance is an often-overlooked component of keeping your body humming and happy. Stable blood sugar is crucial in the optimal functioning of nearly every process happening in our bodies. Luckily (barring a serious medical condition) regulating our blood sugar can be managed with simple, everyday decisions.

- Nutrition Tips for blood sugar balance while on the tour:

    - While you'll be wanting to fuel your body with plenty of carbs on the trip, prioritizing protein is also key! Understandably, that's not always the simplest on these types of excursions, where carb-rich packaged foods are the easiest to access. Don't stress-- as well as you can, try to eat a good balance of proteins, carbs, and fats
    - If eating a carb-heavy meal, try to include protein/fat along with it to optimize glucose absorption (and keep you satiated longer!). Example: Instead of eating a packet of ramen on its own, pair it with packet/tinned fish or chicken and avocado (or an oil, such as coconut or olive)
    - STAY HYDRATED!! This seems like a no-brainer on every level. In terms of this topic, dehydration can cause blood sugar to rise. Make sure you're drinking enough and getting in electrolytes (see recipes section).
    - Move your muscles in some way after a meal. This shouldn't be an issue on a bike tour! However, a stretching routine or short stroll after dinner never hurts.

Macronutrients

- There are three types of macronutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.

- Fats: Fats will be essential on your trip-- it helps build cell walls, supports brain health, and aids in making food more filling..

- All fats are made of chains of fatty acids, which are the basic building blocks of body fat and all the body's hormones. Healthy fats are also going to be incredibly important for adding fuel and satiety to your trip. Some examples you might reach for on your tour include avocado, olive oil, eggs, and flaxseed.

- Nuts and seeds will be superstar additions to your journey. Not only are they packed with essential minerals and beneficial fats, but they're also loaded with antioxidants (win-win!). Because they're higher in calories, nuts and seeds allow you to bring along a lot of fuel without taking up a huge footprint in your pack. If you know your body has a harder time digesting nuts/seeds, or you simply want to up your nutrient absorption, consider soaking ("activating") and dehydrating them in advance to packing. Again, this is not a necessary step, but one you might find beneficial.

- Carbohydrates: Carbs are your body's preferred form of fuel, as they're an easy-to-access energy source. When it comes down to it, the best carbs for us are found in whole and minimally-to-not processed foods. Some carb examples you might reach for on your tour include sweet potatoes, oats, apples, and pasta.

- Carbohydrates are made up of three components: fiber, starch, and sugar.
    - Fiber and starch are complex carbs, while sugar is a simple carb.
    - Complex carbs will not only keep your energy up for longer, but will also provide you with fiber and essential nutrients. They'll be your source of more sustained energy throughout the day, as they digest more slowly.
    - While they get a bad rap, simple carbs will definitely be useful on this type of trip! When you're not quite ready to stop for a meal, but running low on energy and need a boost, a granola bar or fruit snacks are good options. If you're looking for a quick energy source with little or no added sugar, dried fruit is great to grab. Additionally, making sure you're getting in some glucose via an electrolyte mix will help with energy levels.
    - One thing to note-- it's the *chronic* reliance on refined/simple sugars over time that can throw hormones out of whack. In fact, they're believed to be the one group of foods that has the biggest influence on our endocrine (hormonal) system.

- Protein: Protein allows your body to grow, build, and repair tissues. It also protects your body's muscle mass. Furthermore, it'll will be a satiating form of fuel on the tour.
- Protein rich foods include meat, poultry, fish, egg, milk, cheese, or other types of animal by-product foods, along with certain plant sources. Some examples you might reach for on tour include jerky, peanut butter, eggs, tuna, beans, and dried mushrooms.
- If following a vegetarian or vegan diet, you can still get adequate protein from eating a variety of plant protein sources (see 'Plant-based Approach' for more information).

Micronutrients

- Unlike macronutrients, which your body needs in larger quantities, micronutrients are vitamins and minerals needed on a much smaller scale.
  - Although required in smaller amounts, micronutrients are incredibly vital for all bodily functions, disease prevention, and overall wellbeing.

- It's widely agreed that the best way to get in your micronutrients is by eating a wide variety of foods (and colors!).
  - This can be tricky on a bike tour, where an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables aren't always at the ready. A great way to combat this is by prepping dehydrated fruit and veg before your trip! You can even prep them in powdered form to make for easy additions to your meals (see recipes ideas section).
  - Alternatively, and if you feel so inclined, investing in a good greens powder for the trip is an easy way to get in a good dose of vitamins and minerals. It will also be a boost for your immune system and energy. There are a *ton* on the market, so if you decide to do this and need some help choosing, here are three products I would recommend (from least to most expensive).
    - Ora Easy Being Green
    - Primal Harvest Primal Greens
    - AG1

- At the end of the day, if prepping dried foods and greens powders aren't a viable option for you, don't stress! Try to get some variety from day to day, take advantage of fruit and vegetables when you can, stay hydrated, and listen to your body.

Plant-Based Approach

- Plants are packed with micronutrients, which does your body wonders. That being said, there are some nutrients of concern on a plant-based diet, which include Vitamin B12, Zinc, Omega-3s, calcium, and Vitamin D.
  - Along with making sure your diet is widely varied, to ensure you're getting enough of these in your diet, you may want to supplement with a multivitamin for this trip (specifically a Vitamin D and B12 supplement for those avoiding animal foods completely).

- A food is considered a complete protein when it contains all nine essential amino acids.

- While there are some complete plant proteins, most plant protein is incomplete. This means the body is not able to "use" them fully as an intended protein source. Big picture-- unfortunately, you may not be getting as much protein as you think you are on a vegetarian/vegan diet. However, this just means you need to be a bit more diligent about food choices!

- Here's a list of some complete and highly bioavailable (i.e. your body can absorb and use efficiently) plant proteins:
  - Spirulina
  - Hemp
  - Quinoa
  - Lentils
  - Buckwheat
  - Amaranth
  - Soy (There are pros and cons to modern soy, and personally, I wouldn't recommend this as your main protein source.)

- What about nuts?? We've probably all heard that nuts can be a great source of protein. They can be, although, most nuts contain incomplete protein compounds. You can combat this by combining them with a diet rich in seeds, legumes, and grains. An exception to this are Brazil nuts, which contain all nine essential amino acids (however, because of their high selenium content, it's advised to only eat a few Brazil nuts per day).

- Don’t sweat-- It isn’t necessary to eat a complete protein at every meal, as long as you’re getting a “complete picture” throughout the day!

- Example of pairing plants for a complete protein: brown rice, peas, chickpeas, beans, and tahini.
  - Find some plant-based ideas in recipes section.

Gut Health

- Having a healthy, well-functioning gut will do wonders for your trip. The bacteria and other microbes in your gut (your microbiome) not only aid in digestion and nutrient absorption, but may also play an important role in immune, hormone, heart, and brain health. Your microbiome can even influence your mood!

- Fiber is vital in maintaining regular bowel movements and promoting a healthy gut microbiome. Fiber-rich snacks like nuts, seeds, and dried fruits and vegetables are excellent additions to your pack.

- Some ideas for supporting gut health on your trip:
  - As stated above, make sure you’re adding fiber to your meals when you can.
  - Chew food thoroughly (seriously…most of us don’t! MAKE IT MUSH.)
  - Add fermented foods when you can. If you’re able to access things like sauerkraut, yogurt, kefir, and aged cheeses on your stops, chow down.
  - If you know you're particularly sensitive to gut discomfort/constipation when traveling, it may be a good idea to start taking a probiotic supplement prior to the trip, and packing it to continue taking on tour.
  - Make sure to hydrate and rest adequately.
  - If you can, include some bitter foods (bitter greens, dark chocolate, etc.) and herbs (dandelion, chamomile, milk thistle) in your diet to aid in digestion.

Recipe Links

There's nothing wrong with relying on things like bread and peanut butter (wheat and peanuts actually make a complete protein, woot!). However, if you're interested in doing some extra food prep for your journey, here are some recipe jumping-off points to check out! Many of these recipes are highly adaptable, so adjust for your own dietary needs/preferances.

Dehydrating Overview:
Start here! An excellent resource that explains the basics of different types of drying food-- from sun to electric. It also overviews rules-of-thumb for categories of food.
https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/a-beginners-guide-to-dehydrating-food/

Basic Staples

Fruit dehydrating guide:
https://www.epicurious.com/expert-advice/how-to-dehydrate-fruit-step-by-step-article

Vegetable dehydrating guide:
https://www.backpackingchef.com/dehydrating-vegetables.html

Sauce/Salsa Leather method:
https://www.backpackingchef.com/tomato-sauce-leather.html

Fruit Leather method/ideas:
https://www.backpackingchef.com/tomato-sauce-leather.html

Beef jerky how-to/recipes:
https://joybileefarm.com/dehydrator-jerky-recipes/

Mushroom jerky:
https://bikepacking.com/plan/mushroom-jerky-recipe/

Muesli:
https://mountainattitude.wordpress.com/2017/12/12/muesli-the-original-hippie-trail-cereal/

Extra Ideas:

Dehydrated Apple Cinnamon Quinoa Porridge:
https://www.freshoffthegrid.com/dehydrated-apple-quinoa-porridge/#recipe

Sturdy and Delicious Super-Seed Granola Bars:
https://backroadramblers.com/sturdy-and-delicious-super-seed-granola-bars/

Dehydrated Veggie Risotto
https://www.freshoffthegrid.com/dehydrated-risotto-vegetables/

Cold Soaked Pasta Salad:
https://www.freshoffthegrid.com/cold-soaked-pasta-salad/

Dehydrator Chili:
https://www.backpackingchef.com/how-to-make-chili.html

Some standby staples you may not want to forget bringing with you include:

- Powdered milk (dairy/coconut) to reconstitute
- Some form of oil (avocado, olive, coconut, etc.)
- Raw honey (antioxidant-rich natural sweetener, useful for minor wound care and colds)
- Salt/pepper/seasonings

No grocer in sight? Here are some food items that are usually available in *most* dollar stores:

- Granola
- Oatmeal
- Dried fruit
- Dried pasta
- Add water pasta dishes
- Add water rice dishes
- Instant mashed potato
- Tuna/salmon pouches and tins
- Dried soup
- Peanut butter
- Honey
- Crackers
- Hot sauce and seasonings

Electrolytes:

I checked in with RBT 2024's resident herbal educator, Kristina, for some guidance on electrolyte mixes you may find useful on tour! I particularly love the second recipe, as you can prep a powdered mix before tour, and simply add your liquid of choice. She also passed along some great mineral-rich herbs to consider (listed at bottom).

DIY Electrolyte Mixes

Electrolyte Lemonade:

- 40 oz water
- 2 tbsp Lemon juice
- 2 tsp Maple Syrup or Sugar (or 1 and ½ tsp honey)- around 9g sugar
- ¼-½ tsp sea salt
- 400 mg potassium chloride powder (~200 mg potassium)
- ¼ tsp magnesium malate powder (~60 mg magnesium)

Simple Powdered Mix:

- 1 quart liquid (green tea, herbal tea, coconut water, or plain water)
- ⅛ -1/4 tsp Himalayan salt (or sea salt)
- 1 tsp calcium magnesium powder
- 1-2 TBSP sugar or maple sugar (honey or maple syrup is also great if you don't need a completely powdered mix)

Mineral-Rich Herbs

Oat straw (Avena sativa)
Nettle leaf (Urtica dioica)
Alfalfa arial parts (Medicago sativa)
Rose hips (Rosa spp)
Red clover arial parts (Trifolium pratense)
Dandelion root/leaf (Taraxacum officinalis)
Raspberry leaf (Rubus idaeus)