



Track Cycling

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Track cycling involves a range of events ranging from anaerobic sprint events to longer endurance based events. Sprint events include individual and team sprints with the effort lasting less than 30 seconds up to a few minutes.

Track sprinters do the majority of their training at the velodrome along with specialized training on a stationary bike and weights sessions in the gym. All events are raced on an indoor or outdoor circular track called a velodrome on specific track bikes which are single speed and have no breaks.

Training Diet

Sprint track cyclists should have a training diet that promotes optimal power to weight ratio. Therefore, recovery from strength and long, intense track sessions is essential while ensuring energy intake is not excessive to prevent excess weight gain. This can require careful planning and assistance from a sports dietitian.

Sprint track cyclists have lower carbohydrate requirements compared with road cyclists. 3-4g/kg is likely appropriate depending body composition goals and phase of the season. Carbohydrate must be adequate to fuel repeated efforts in training.

There should be an emphasis on ensuring nutrient-rich options from all the food groups. Sports foods such as high energy gels and bars are less likely to be used.

Protein containing foods should feature regularly throughout the day to optimize recovery and maintain lean muscle mass. Protein requirements will be similar to other strength athletes around 1.6g/kg and more for teenage athletes. This can be met by including adequate serves of lean meat, low fat dairy products (or alternatives) or vegetarian sources of protein such as tofu, nuts and legumes. Recovery products like whey protein powder formulations may be convenient at times.

Track endurance cyclists should see the fact sheet on [Fuelling Fitness for Road Cycling](#) as training demands are often similar and many athletes race both disciplines.

Fluid Needs

Whether the velodrome is indoors or outdoors, along with environmental conditions, will influence fluid requirements. Indoor velodromes are often heated for competitions to provide a 'fast track' for the riders.

There is a lot of sitting around between races and cyclists should ensure that they are not over drinking from boredom or nerves or else they may feel bloated and uncomfortable. If it is warm and the cyclists are doing long warm ups on rollers, it is important to replace fluids before race start.

Track bikes do not carry bidons so for longer races it is essential the cyclists start well hydrated and use the time between heats and finals to rehydrate if necessary.

What should I eat pre-event?

Carbohydrate stores are not a limiting factor in sprint track cycling events, thus carbohydrate loading or large pre-event meals are not necessary or advised. The most important thing about the pre-event meal is that the cyclist feels comfortable to push themselves to maximal intensity.

The meal prior the event should be consumed ~2hrs before the warm up. The pre-event meal and any additional snacks should be low in fat and fibre, easily digested and very importantly, trialled in training first.

When multiple events are raced in one day or evening, total energy needs must be considered. Small frequent snacks will help with recovery as well as preparation for the next event. Foods such as cereal bars or bananas are convenient and appropriate options. Where time before events is short, sports drinks may be useful.

What about recovery?

Recovery after long training sessions or a day of racing is very important. Therefore, if it's not feasible to consume a recovery meal in the hour of finishing the session the cyclist should be prepared with recovery options for the drive home, such as a sandwich or milk drink. This should be followed up with a meal containing lean meat/fish with vegetables and rice/pasta.

Cyclists should also be aware of nutrition recovery strategies after weights training sessions and include carbohydrate and at least 10-15g of protein such as a milk drink, eggs on toast or yoghurt.

The recovery snacks must be considered in the overall nutrition plan so timing of meals and training is important.

Other Nutrition Tips

Compared with road cycling where cyclists typically start and finish training sessions from home, track cyclists must travel to and from a velodrome. Extra preparation may be required to ensure adequate fluids and appropriate food options are on hand. Food available to purchase at the velodrome is often not appropriate to optimize performance or recovery, expensive or not available at all. The bottom line? Be prepared with nutritious foods and fluids.

Creatine Monohydrate is scientifically supported to enhance strength gains and recovery between repeated bouts of short high intensity training and may be useful for sprint cyclists under the guidance of a sports dietitian. For information on Creatine, please refer to the [Creatine Fact Sheet](#)

Track cyclists must think carefully about the type of event, phase of training and whether or not they are also training on the road to understand the most appropriate sports nutrition recommendations.

How to get involved

Visit Cycling Australia www.cycling.org.au to contact your local state cycling organisation.

Authors: Olivia Warnes and Tanya Lewis (SDA SA members)