

Nutrition & Training Ideas in Cold Weather

As the holiday season nears, there are a few things that are inevitable: your in-laws & family will drive you insane, you'll put on a few "winter insulation" pounds, and the weather will start to get cold and wet. When temperatures drop and precipitation begins, it makes running a lot less enjoyable (at least for the "sane" runners). During the rainy season, scheduling runs becomes more like trying to get the cable company to meet you at a convenient time. The decreased amount of daylight and increased inclement weather makes running distances much more difficult in the winter.

A good way to keep your running habits alive is to work on speed training during the winter, unless of course you enjoy watching bodybuilders stare into the mirror while you hoof out an endless ten miles on the treadmill vortex of time. Intervals and short fast runs are a great way to avoid the boredom of an indoor track or treadmill. Below, there is a list of some interval patterns suggested for increasing minute per mile paces in long distance, endurance runners.

0.5 miles - x8 - with 2 minutes rest – for 8 sessions

1.0 miles – x4 – with 4 minute rest – for 8 sessions

1.8 miles – x3 – with 6 minute rest – for 6 sessions

Training in the winter months can be difficult, so nutrition should play a huge factor in your game plan. During the cold and rainy season, it always seems like our bodies crave two things: warm foods and an overall increase in calories. It's no doubt that most of us get more hungry in the winter months. This is probably due to the fact that the temperature decreases and when we eat food our body temperatures increase. This "thermogenic" effect of food is one of the main reasons why many people gain weight during the holiday season (not to mention the delicious holiday treats). Eating foods that are warm is most desirable in the winter. For pre-exercise meals, a great option is a batch of oatmeal. Oatmeal is warm, rich in fuel-providing carbohydrates, and has relatively high water content, something you don't find in most foods.

Water and fluid consumption is one of the main concerns for athletes performing in the cold. Because of the lowered temperatures our bodies start to blunt our thirst mechanism. A tall glass of ice water doesn't sound as pleasant when freezing temperatures are present, even though our bodies may be craving fluids. The number one challenge with exercising in the cold is trying to stay adequately hydrated. Resist the urge to not drink fluids and be prepared to "quench your thirst" that may not feel like being quenched.

After running in the cold and wet weather, nothing sounds better than a cup of hot chocolate. Despite popular belief, hot chocolate (milk) is actually starting to become known as a very good post-exercise "supplement". According to Brian D. Roy from the Centre for Muscle Metabolism and Biophysics "there is some performance based data that suggests that chocolate milk is as effective as a commercially available sports drink in facilitating recovery". Roy also states, "Fat free milk is a safe and effective post-exercise beverage that has been shown to promote recovery from exercise and should be considered as a viable alternative to commercial sports drinks by lactose tolerant individuals".

