

# The runner's best practice guide





# Introduction

Get your running shoes on – it's almost time for the Real Insurance Sydney Harbour 10k and 5k! This isn't just a running event, it's a chance to take in some of Sydney's most spectacular views, turbo-charge your health and fitness plans and perhaps even gear up for other half and full marathons.

If you're planning to participate – well done. The physical benefits of running are well documented: strengthened muscles, stronger bones, improved cardiovascular fitness and healthy weight maintenance.<sup>1</sup> However it can also improve

your mental health, with running providing an immediate mood boost and research suggesting even one hour of exercise a week can help prevent up to 12% of future cases of depression.<sup>2</sup>

Like anything in life, though, preparation is the key to success. Here, we share running tips – from a runner's diet to tips on training for a 10km – run to help you prepare, get the most out of the run, and – best of all – enjoy the whole experience.

**FACT: AUSTRALIANS LOVE RUNNING. THE MOST RECENT STATISTICS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS REVEAL THE POPULARITY OF JOGGING AND RUNNING NEARLY DOUBLED IN A SEVEN-YEAR PERIOD, AND NEARLY ONE IN 10 PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN RUNNING OR JOGGING IN A 12-MONTH PERIOD.<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> [Running and jogging – health benefits](#) – Better Health Channel | <sup>2</sup> [Exercise your mood](#) – Black Dog Institute | <sup>3</sup> [Australians keep jogging and running](#) – Australian Bureau of Statistics

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# Fuel up: food and diet for runners

You've no doubt heard it before, but you really do need to put in the right fuel to get the most out of your body – whether it's race day or any other day of the year.

Try adding these 7 superfoods to your diet in the lead-up to race day:

## 1 / Porridge

The breakfast of champions is surely a hearty bowl of porridge, with oats not only adding a protein and fibre boost to your diet, but also helping you to maintain that satisfied “full” feeling for hours.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 / Berries

Instead of adding sugar to your porridge, sweeten (and brighten) up your breakfast bowl with raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries. Berries contain powerful antioxidants and Dr Michelle Hauser, a certified chef and nutrition educator, says mixing different types of berries is best as it “gives you the benefits of slightly different blends of nutrients and phytochemicals”.<sup>5</sup>

## 3 / Chia seeds

These teeny tiny seeds are big on nutrients. They're high in fibre and protein, loaded with antioxidants, and contain calcium, phosphorus, magnesium and other nutrients that are important for bone health.<sup>6</sup> Best of all, they're super easy to incorporate into your diet – just sprinkle on your breakfast, add them to baked goods, combine them with vegetable and rice dishes or enjoy them with yoghurt.

## 4 / Broccoli

What's a superfood list without broccoli? Broccoli is packed with the good stuff and associated with a wide range of health benefits – indeed it may even help slow down the ageing process.<sup>7</sup> Add it to your regular pasta and rice dishes or grate it into coleslaw. You can also make it the star ingredient by baking it with garlic then drizzling with olive oil.

<sup>4</sup> [The Many Benefits of Oatmeal – And 7 Different Ways to Cook It – Healthline](#) | <sup>5</sup> [12 “superfoods” you should be eating – Harvard Medical School](#) | <sup>6</sup> [11 Proven Health Benefits of Chia Seeds – Healthline](#)  
<sup>7</sup> [Top 14 health benefits of broccoli – Healthline](#)

## 5 / Sweet potatoes

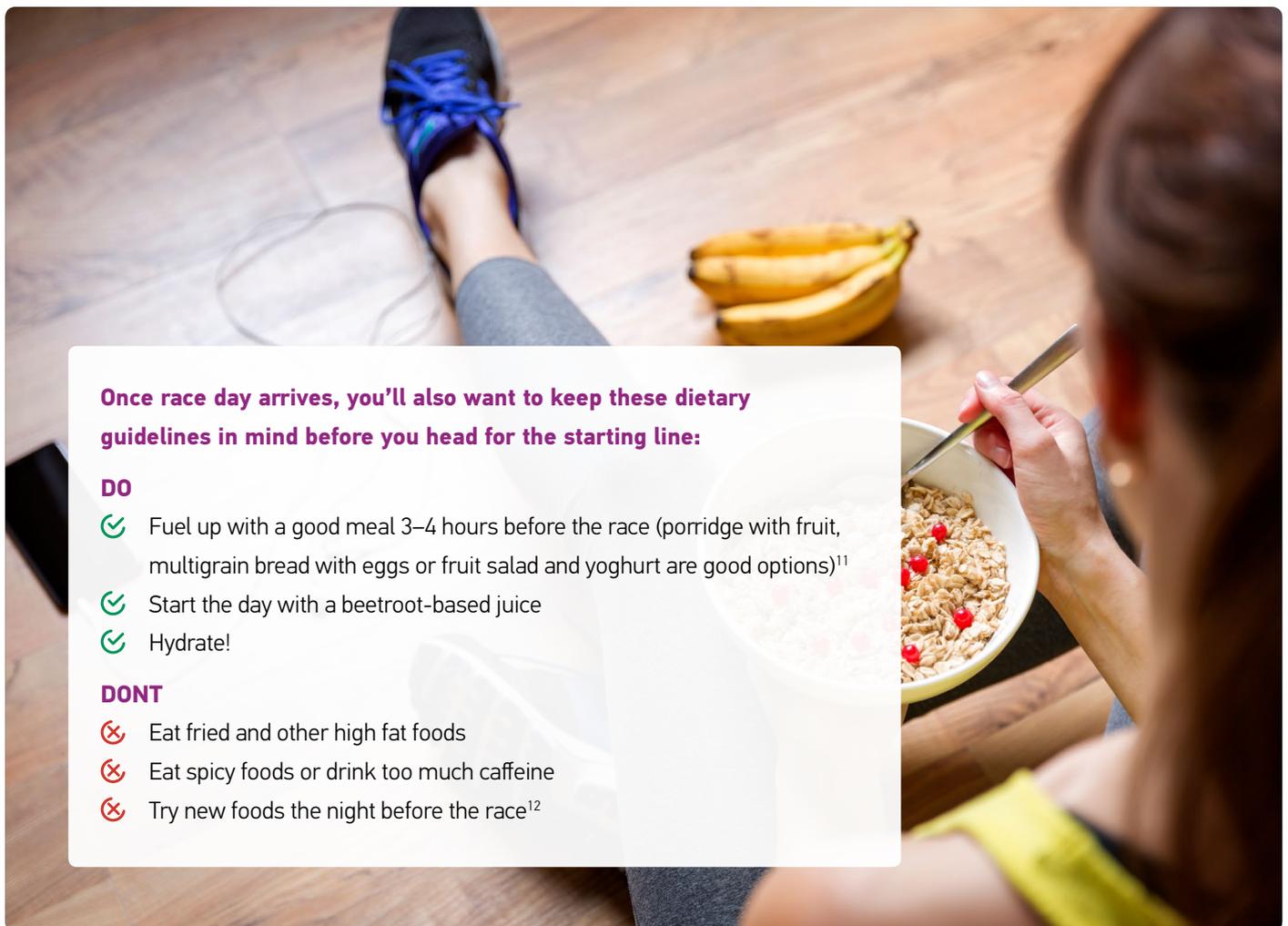
Sweet potatoes are even sweeter when baked whole in the oven. You can enjoy this simple and sweet dish by adding a little butter, sour cream, maple syrup, nuts or anything else you fancy. Sweet potatoes are helpful in promoting gut health and supporting healthy vision, and the purple variety may even enhance brain function.<sup>8</sup>

## 6 / Salmon

Most of us know salmon contains essential fatty oils, however did you know that it's also an excellent source of B vitamins? These vitamins help turn the food you eat into energy, create and repair DNA, and reduce the inflammation that can lead to heart disease.<sup>9</sup> A very appetising way to enjoy salmon is to combine cooked salmon with mashed potato, an egg or two, onion, and bread crumbs to form small patties. Shallow fry and enjoy hot or cold.

## 7 / Leek

Leeks may just be a runner's secret to success, since they're packed with flavonoids, which support your body's response to oxidative stress, and vitamin K, which provides benefits for both the heart and bones. Add leek to salads, make a cheese and leek quiche or search your favourite online recipe sites for the best potato and leek soup.



**Once race day arrives, you'll also want to keep these dietary guidelines in mind before you head for the starting line:**

### DO

- ✔ Fuel up with a good meal 3–4 hours before the race (porridge with fruit, multigrain bread with eggs or fruit salad and yoghurt are good options)<sup>11</sup>
- ✔ Start the day with a beetroot-based juice
- ✔ Hydrate!

### DONT

- ✘ Eat fried and other high fat foods
- ✘ Eat spicy foods or drink too much caffeine
- ✘ Try new foods the night before the race<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [6 Surprising Health Benefits of Sweet Potatoes – Healthline](#) | <sup>9</sup> [11 Impressive Health Benefits of Salmon – Healthline](#) | <sup>10</sup> [The 19 Best Prebiotic Foods You Should Eat – Healthline](#)  
<sup>11</sup> [What to Eat Before Running – Healthline](#) | <sup>12</sup> [Everyday food that can help your training – Real Insurance](#)



# Get your shoes on: training ideas for runners

So, you've [kicked any excuses to the kerb](#) and are ready to start training. Where do you start?

To kickstart your training regimen, consider finding someone you can share the experience with, a training buddy. There are plenty of [benefits to be gained by training with a partner](#), including boosted motivation, accountability, the excitement of hitting shared goals and bonding time with someone you enjoy being around.

Choose a partner who's at a similar fitness level to you (or someone who won't mind running at your pace if they're fitter than you). Make sure you're both clear on expectations, a training schedule and goals. Then, make sure you're supporting and cheering for each other throughout the whole process.

Some of the exercises that'll help you as a runner are:

## 1 / Interval training

Interval training mixes high intensity sprints with jogging, and can teach you to push beyond your comfort zone and get the

confidence to pick up your pace when needed. It might even help you sprint to the finish line.

After warming up, sprint for 300m then jog to recover for 100m. Try 4 reps when starting out and build up to 10 if you can.

## 2 / Swimming

Swimming is a great alternate exercise to training for runners, and can be particularly helpful when you're recovering from a running injury.

## 3 / Strength and bodyweight exercises

[Building strength](#) should be a goal for every runner, since running requires core strength and pelvic stability. That doesn't necessarily mean heading to the gym, though. [Simple bodyweight exercises](#), such as wall squats, bridge holds, push ups, planks and calf raises, can be done anywhere with minimum fuss and maximum impact.

<sup>1</sup> [6 Surprising Health Benefits of Sweet Potatoes](#) – Healthline | <sup>2</sup> [11 Impressive Health Benefits of Salmon](#) – Healthline | <sup>3</sup> [The 19 Best Probiotic Foods You Should Eat](#) – Healthline  
<sup>4</sup> [What to Eat Before Running](#) – Healthline | <sup>5</sup> [Everyday food that can help your training](#) – Real Insurance

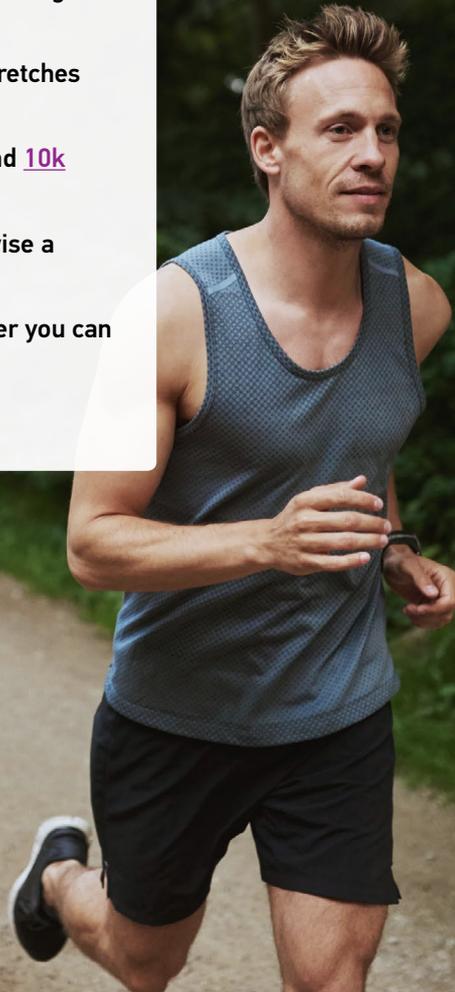
## 4 / Mixing it up

Try a variety of exercises to find things you enjoy most and build an enjoyable weekly training schedule. Why not add a [stair workout](#) or [aqua workout](#) to the mix?

While we all want to [improve our running times](#), the most important thing to remember during training is to stay safe. You don't want an injury stopping you from getting to the start line.

### Our top tips for staying safe are:

- ✔ Don't overtrain – start gently and only increase your running distance by 10% per week
- ✔ Always warm up properly before a run with pre-run stretches and cool down after a run
- ✔ Read about recommended training schedules for [5k](#) and [10k](#) runs
- ✔ Don't keep running through pain – see a doctor otherwise a small injury could turn into a bigger problem
- ✔ Run on softer surfaces like grass, sand or dirt whenever you can
- ✔ [Protect your knees](#)
- ✔ Get expert advice to find the right running shoes.





# Boost wellness (and be truly race-ready)

As you are training and focusing on the race, it's important to remember that the race is just one part of your overall state of health and wellbeing. Since each part may overlap and may influence the other, start keeping an eye on these other three areas that can have a big impact on your feeling of wellbeing.

## 1 / Mindset

"I can do it." Repeat that out loud three times. Feel better?

It's amazing what a little positive thought can do. In fact, studies show that it can help reduce anxiety and worry,<sup>13</sup> help you achieve success<sup>14</sup> and even live a longer life.<sup>15</sup>

**If you are inclined to look on the less bright side of life, here are tips psychologists recommend for boosting positive thinking:<sup>16</sup>**

- ☺ Make a list of positive words and memorise them
- ☺ When you find yourself focusing on the negative, ask yourself if it's resulting in action that improves your life? If so, keep it. If not, think about how you can change it
- ☺ Make a point of noticing the good things in life
- ☺ Keep a gratitude journal
- ☺ Watch something fun

<sup>13</sup>The power of positive thinking: Pathological worry is reduced by thought replacement in Generalized Anxiety Disorder – Behaviour Research and Therapy | <sup>14</sup>The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success? – Psychological Bulletin | <sup>15</sup>Positive Emotions in Early Life and Longevity: Findings from the Nun Study – Journal of Personality and Social Psychology | <sup>16</sup>Thinking Positive: 11 Ways to Boost Positive Thinking – Psychology Today

## 2 / Sleep

Sleep isn't just a luxury. The [right amount of sleep is essential](#) to keep your health on track, with sleep deprivation linked to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, lowered immune function, more colds, poorer cognitive function and a shortened lifespan.

## 3 / Friends and family

Being social helps you feel connected and build a support network of people who will be there for you in good times and in bad.

[Running is a sport that's for everyone](#), so why not ask some friends or family members to join you as you train?

### RECOMMENDED AMOUNTS OF SLEEP VARY BY AGE:<sup>17</sup>

School-aged children	9–11 hours
Teenagers	8–10 hours
Adults under 65 years	7–9 hours
Seniors	7–8 hours

### Getting the kids involved in sport

The [Australian Active Kids Report](#) looks at how Australian parents help facilitate their children's sporting involvement.<sup>18</sup>

- ✔ 85% of Aussie kids are involved in weekly sporting activities
- ✔ Parents spend a lot of time on kids' sports activities each week: 5.6 hours driving to games and training, 5.6 hours waiting and 5.1 hours actually involved in the activities
- ✔ Families spend on average \$2,180 each year on kids' sporting activities
- ✔ 86% of parents say these activities are an important part of their lives



<sup>17</sup>Sleep needs across the lifespan – Sleep Health Foundation | <sup>18</sup> Australian Active Kids report – CoreData



## Post-race: the finish line isn't the end

You made it across the finishing line. Congratulations! It's time to celebrate, but first you need to do a few things, starting with some stretches.

It's important to stretch out your legs, arms, hips and anything else that got a work out, after every run. This helps your muscles relax back to their normal length and the increased

blood flow from stretching helps flush away any waste products from the muscles.

Running coaches recommend slow static stretching post-race – stretching a muscle slowly and holding it in this position for at least one minute.

### Experts also suggest the following post-race practices:

Eat a snack such as a banana, low-fat chocolate milk or a protein drink to refuel your muscles, repair muscle damage and replenish energy stores

Rehydrate by drinking the fluid you lost in sweat plus a little extra

Do some low-impact, light exercise within 12–24 hours after the race

The end of the race is also a good time to look over what worked and didn't work in your preparations. You can also see it as not the end but the beginning, as you start planning the next big run.



## Checklist: Before the race

- ✔ Try different breakfasts before the race to see which works best for you before a run
- ✔ Eat breakfast about 3–4 hours before the race
- ✔ Drink enough to satisfy your thirst about 45 minutes before the race
- ✔ Pack a small pre-run snack to enjoy 1/2 hour–1 hour before the race
- ✔ Leave time for a [pre-run warm up and stretching](#)
- ✔ Apply sunscreen
- ✔ Bring a positive mindset

No matter whether you're a beginner or more experienced runner, the Real Insurance Sydney Harbour 10k and 5k is one to add to your calendar. By following this guide and preparing for race day, you're set to enjoy the spectacular scenes Sydney has to offer while keeping fit and having a lot of fun. Are you ready? Set? Go!

**KEEP ON RUNNING AND SECURE YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE WITH  
[REAL LIFE INSURANCE](#). REQUEST A QUICK QUOTE NOW.**