

Road Cycling Helpful Riding Tips

Pre-Ride:

- **Safety first – Always wear a helmet!**
- Come prepared for your ride (tubes, pump/Co2, tire levers, food, gels/bars, water/sports drink, money, ID).
- Your bicycle should be clean, tires aired, chain lubed and in a safe working condition.
- Wear the proper clothing in order to deal with changing weather conditions.
- Hydrate for longer rides 2-3 days in advance, do not overhydrate the morning of a long training ride. Eat a good balanced breakfast – good carbs and plenty of protein – keep the sugar low.
- If you like to stretch before your ride, do so, but the critical time to stretch is after your ride.

DURING THE RIDE:

- Whether training on your own or with others, allow 10-20 minutes of easy riding time in order to allow your muscles to warm-up before hard efforts begin.
- Fluids should be consumed on a regular basis during the ride (a good rule of thumb is one bottle every 45 or so minutes), on hot days- even more important. If you feel thirsty, you're getting dehydrated already. Drink before you're thirsty!
- Consume your favorite energy food every 30 minutes as well, always eat before you are hungry as to avoid "bonking." Eat in small amounts frequently and wash down with water. (Once you feel hungry, it is very hard to gain your energy back in a reasonable amount of time).
- Be attentive on the bike (watch for cars, other riders, obstacles in the road, construction zones, obey all traffic laws, share the road, use common sense while riding). **BE PREDICTABLE – Cyclists fair best when they act and are treated like vehicles.**
- When drafting or using the "paceline" technique, look ahead of the rider that you are drafting off of in order to anticipate unforeseen circumstances. Don't cross wheels!
- When riding in large groups, pay particular attention to the other riders around you and do not make sudden moves. When overtaking a rider say "*passing on your left.*" Point out road hazards to riders behind you.
- Don't be afraid to give less experienced riders tips on how to make the ride safer and more enjoyable.
- Last but not least, **Have Fun!!!**

POST RIDE:

- Always finish your ride with a 10-20 minute cool down phase in order to slow your muscles and breathing down gradually. (There is nothing harder on your body than hammering and then stopping right away).

- **NUTRITION:** The most important thing you can do after your ride is to eat. We have an optimal time to replenish our glycogen stores once exercise is completed. If we miss this “window of opportunity,” our bodies will feel extremely sluggish and tired for hours on end. Missing this window will prolong recovery time. The key is to take in fluids and carbohydrates/protein within 1 hour after exercise. This means that you should replenish your body with good things such as fruits and vegetable, lean meat/fish/poultry, whole grain breads, nuts, granola, yogurt, low fat chocolate milk, and water. Your body will repair/rebuild itself using what you eat after a ride so always think twice before consuming foods that are heavy with fat. You want food calories, not empty calories.

- **STRETCH:** It is also highly recommended that you stretch after all your rides. Once you are done riding, the muscles are warm and therefore the elasticity of the tissue is increased and muscles will be more pliable to various movements. Elevating your legs, getting a massage, and taking an epsom salt bath will also help with leg recovery. All these things will help remove lactic acid from your legs and speed up recovery.

- **REST:** Your body rebuilds as you sleep and the most neglected part of any training program is rest. Since most of us have very busy schedules, time management becomes even more important yet most individuals find time to train, run errands, work, and spend time with family and friends, all at the expense of losing valuable amounts of sleep every night. It is actually more important to skip a training ride and get a full nights rest if one is feeling tired! Listen to your body and look for signs of fatigue and overtraining.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Keep your bike clean and in good working condition. Inspect the frame regularly, check the cables/chainrings/chain for wear, and always check your brakes and tires before you ride.

- Remember that you get out of your body what you put into it. Riding allows us to cheat once-in-a-while and have some ice cream or cake but good nutrition is a daily effort and the better you eat, the better you will perform and achieve your goals.

- HAVE FUN!! Cycling is about sharing your passion with others who do the same. To avoid being stagnant, vary your routes, go for a mountain bike ride, teach someone new how to ride, race, do a century, whatever.....just as long as your experiences on your bike make you happy and keep you longing for more!

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