

Nutrition

At a cross country week I attended some time ago it was interesting to see what people ate before and during their flight, let's have a look at some and make comments.

- Nutragrain for breakfast, Muslie Bars in flight. Hardly the best, full of sugar. Sugar burns off quite quick. The body has a manner in compensating for excess sugar, it says. "I have enough sugar so I will stop producing sugars naturally." So when the excess sugar from the muslie bars has been used up the body will no longer be making enough and you get a sugar drought. Brain deterioration.
- Nuts, not bad but apparently almonds are the best, the fat apparently tends to line the stomach and slow down the absorption of food, perhaps like a slow release fertilizer. Add this with Fruit and quite a good mix but you still need some more variety.
- Sports Drinks. Again we have the same problem with sugars as above. There is however an advantage in having a 50/50 mix of sports drink with water, in a separate container to the normal water that you drink, this stops bugs in the straw. Use this if you are getting tired or approaching final glide and need a final boost. See that the drink replaces the natural salts that are lost in the action of sweating.
- Carbohydrates, these are good as they are slow releasers of energy and apparently help the retention of water.
- Water. Drink lots and lots and lots. Maurie Bradney did some study on this some time ago, where pilots were weighed before and after their flight, together with the water they took. On average pilots drank half as much as they lost. So as a guide drink twice as much as you would expect. You can soon work out if you are drinking enough, if your urine is yellow and smells you are not drinking enough. If you are dehydrated your brain will fail to function properly. Keep your level of water intake up all the time, not just the day of a flight, keep yourself hydrated all the time. Have you ever noticed that car accidents increase when the hot summer days come around for the first time in the season?
- Coffee Coke and alcohol. All of these reduce the body's ability to retain water. Coffee does however keep you awake. I take a bottle of coffee in the glider to kill off any tiredness that may develop in the flight. It can be quite scary to become dozy 200k from home. A few swigs of coffee may bring you back to life, but don't rely on it. Sleep well.
- Smoking reduces the lungs capacity to absorb oxygen and for those flying at altitude will suffer earlier from the effects of hypoxia, perhaps at as low as 8,000ft.
- Sandwich with meat, and salad. The type of food that you would expect to eat on a daily basis is the best for flying, just make sure you have a way to keep it cool and not too crumby. My preferable meat is salted meat, it is less likely to go off and give you salmonellae.
- Apple, good for the last sugar fix on final glide.
- How to store your food. You can obtain quite cheap thermally insulated bags from super markets. Great to put your food in and keep it cool.

In principle eat, as you would do on any day of the week, but drink drink drink.

James Cooper