



# Making the Transition

by Alexis Williams, RD

From the time I was a little girl, I loved to run, and I'd run anytime I could find the time. But several years ago I came to the realization that my body and my mind wanted and needed some variety. I decided to add in some cross training in addition to running. Since I had always enjoyed biking, some fellow runners who had recently completed triathlons talked me into going for a ride with them. I enjoyed the ride and slowly started to develop an interest in doing a triathlon myself. After improving my swimming and investing in a decent bike, I did my first triathlon. A few years after my first race I completed my first Ironman triathlon. If you're like me and have ever felt the need to spice up your routine or need to incorporate cross training into your plans to prevent injury, making the transition to doing more and new types of activity requires some thought about your overall sports nutrition. The following are a few important nutritional considerations as you transition into becoming a multi-sport athlete.

When you start adding in extra workouts, you will inevitably be burning more calories. Typically, many workouts burn between 400 to 700 calories per hour. This may be higher or lower depending on your intensity, efficiency and body size. If you go from working out three days per week to six days per week then you can expect to be hungrier and will need to add in some extra pre-workout and post-workout snacks. Snacking is the most effective way to add additional calories to your diet because they will help fuel your workouts and metabolism and can be timed closer to when you need the extra energy.

If you have gone from working every other day to working out daily, you will need to pay more attention to your recovery nutrition. Eating a post-workout recovery snack is particularly important when you have less than 24 hours between workouts, such as two workouts in one day or one at night and one early the next morning. This recovery snack should include sufficient carbohydrates (about half your body weight in pounds in grams of carbohydrates) and protein (10 to 20 grams is sufficient). For example, a 140 lb athlete should aim to include about 70 g of carbs in their post-workout snack. For example, a fruit smoothie with yogurt or a bowl of cereal with fruit could work. The carbohydrates will help restore muscle glycogen, which is like refilling your car with gas, while the protein will help with the repair and rebuilding of muscles. For weight-conscious athletes, this may seem like a lot of calories, but it's best not to skimp on recovery nutrition, but rather cut out extras like cream in your coffee, alcoholic beverages or snacking in front of the TV at night.

While you are training, you will also need to consider the effects of having less time for meal preparation and cooking. Often I see multi-sport athletes eating out at restaurants and grabbing food on the go because they're too busy training to cook. I am sure many of you can relate to this dilemma, but it's still important to make sure you have nutritional choices on hand. Consider cooking up protein options such as hard-boiled eggs or chicken or turkey breast in bulk so you have enough for three to four days at a time. Keep vegetables and fruits cut up (or buy pre-cut ones), so you have these to nibble on instead of reaching for junk. Cook up whole-grain pasta, rice quinoa and sweet potatoes—you will have a carbohydrate-rich meal option that's ready-to-go. Assemble the pre-cooked good into containers and you'll have a bunch of healthy, homemade meals in minutes.

Your hydration may also need some attention as a result of your extra workouts. Start by topping up your fluids by sipping on 2 cups/500mL of fluid in the one to two hours prior to all your workouts. During the workout, aim to consume enough fluid to replace sweat losses during workouts. This can be estimated by weighing yourself before and after workouts. For every 1 lb you lose, it's approximately equal to 500 mL of fluid. If after your workout you are down more than 2% of your body

weight, you didn't drink enough so aim to increase your fluid intake for next time. To replace lost fluids in workouts, be sure to consume a beverage with electrolytes (e.g., sports drink, coconut water, vegetable juice) or consume some sodium in your post-workout meal (e.g., cottage cheese and fruit).

## Fight Inflammation

When you add in extra workouts and try new activities, your body needs to adjust to the increased training stress. Sore joints and muscles can be a result of inflammation, the body's natural healing process. Foods that are high in omega 3 fats can help fight inflammation. The best sources are fatty fish such as salmon, trout, sardines, mackerel and herring. Don't be afraid of the term fatty because it refers to the heart healthy kind of fat your body needs, not the unwanted fat you find in processed foods. Other sources include walnuts, chia and flax seeds and beans. If you don't think your intake is optimal, a high-quality fish oil supplement can used to optimize intakes.

There is less solid research on other foods that help reduce inflammation. However, pineapple, ginger, turmeric, dark leafy greens and other antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables have been suggested as being helpful and certainly will boost the nutrition of your overall diet. Whether you ever plan to compete in other sports, making the transition from a single-sport athlete to a multi-sport athlete requires thought. But, if you plan well, you'll find the increased volume is much easier to manage for you and your family. ❖

## About Alexis

Alexis Williams is a registered dietitian and personal trainer in Burlington, Ontario. She is an avid runner and triathlete. Visit her website [www.transitionhealth.ca](http://www.transitionhealth.ca) for more articles and ideas or to contact Alexis for online or in-person nutrition coaching services. You can get recipes and nutrition tips by becoming a fan of Transition Health on Facebook.

