Changing the world
with **women and girls**

act:onaid

Nutrition advice for
ActionAid runners

Schoolchildren are pictured running during a PE break at the Kalas Primary School in northern Uganda.

© Kibuuka Mukisa Oscar/ActionAid

A runner's guide to food and drink

Thank you for registering to take part in a running event for ActionAid.

We really appreciate your support for our work with women and girls living in poverty.

Whether you're running a 10k or a marathon, we hope you find this guide helpful when planning how and what you're going to eat and drink in the build up to the big day.

Just as a disclaimer, everyone is different so please do tailor our advice to suit your personal needs! This guide aims to enhance your performance, but we cannot take responsibility for any injuries or health issues that occur after following this advice.

If you're yet to lace up your tainers and sign up to a running event for ActionAid, please visit **actionaid.org.uk/running** to find a challenge that suits you.

Whether you're fitness phobic or the king of the gym, there's something for everyone.

Claire and Victoria supporting ActionAid at the Royal Parks Half Marathon in London in 2017.

What you should be eating and why

What, when and how much you eat can directly affect your performance.

Having the right balance of food and fluid can help prevent exhaustion and even injuries.

You'll need plenty of carbohydrates to give you energy, as well as protein for your muscles as you train for your run. Having enough vitamins and minerals, particularly calcium and iron, is also important.

© ActionAid

ActionAid cheerers waiting to spot our team of runners at Royal Parks Half Marathon 2017

Carbohydrates

Wholegrain bread, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, root vegetables (like carrots or turnips), potatoes and fruit.

Protein
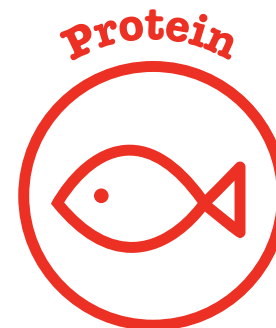
Beans, peas, lentils, fish (particularly oily fish like mackerel or salmon), eggs, tofu, chicken and cheese.

Iron

Meat, beans, dried fruit, nuts, soybean flour and watercress.

Calcium

Milk or soya milk, yogurt, canned sardines or salmon, baked beans, tofu and dried apricots.

Vitamin C helps the absorption of iron, so enjoy a glass of freshly squeezed orange or grapefruit juice with your breakfast, or add tomatoes or peppers to meals when you can.*

*Guidance from www.nhs.uk

With support from ActionAid, **Puthy** from Cambodia grows a variety of fruits and vegetables in her garden including cabbages, cucumbers and papaya.

What to eat
before your run

Increase your carbs

Make sure to focus your diet around pasta, rice, bread and other carbohydrates, with some vegetables too. It's recommended that you increase your carb intake by roughly 10% (equal to 300-400 calories) over the three or four days leading up to the race.

Opt for low fibre

Fruit can also be a good source of carbohydrate but stick to fruits that are low in fibre (like bananas, cantaloupe or grapes), as too much fibre could cause stomach issues mid-race. Avoid all dried fruits, prune juice and berries for this reason!

Play it safe

It's generally important to keep it simple and opt for plain, non-spicy meals over more exciting options (sorry!). Avoid unfamiliar foods and meals that historically haven't agreed with you. A dodgy tummy is the last thing you want to be dealing with in the days leading up to your race.

Time your breakfast

Eat your pre-race breakfast around two to three hours before your race starts. You'll probably feel jittery and nervous, but it's really important that you eat a proper meal to keep you going during the day.

The ideal breakfast would be something like porridge oats with skimmed milk, served with nuts, bananas, honey and a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice on the side.

"The money I make from growing vegetables and rearing chickens means I can support my family and help my children regularly attend school."

Puthy, an ActionAid model farmer in Cambodia

What to eat
during your run

It's important to keep fuelling during your run, depending on how long it is. Some experts recommend replenishing your carbohydrate stores **every 45 minutes to an hour**.

Mid-race snacks could include bananas, pretzels or gummy sweets. Some people like to use **energy gels**, which are easy to transport and help you load up quickly on carbs.

Like with your meals leading up to the race, **avoid experimenting** with new snacks on the day and stick to the ones that have worked best for you when training.

" I chose to run the London Marathon for ActionAid as I wanted to raise much-needed funds for a great cause and get a bit fitter in the process. So glad I did!'

**George McAulay
(London Marathon 2018 runner, pictured)**

What to eat
after your run

Restore

Restore your muscle energy (glycogen) as quickly as you can after your run with something high in carbohydrates, like a sandwich, pasta or a granola bar.

Recover

Balance out your meal with protein; salmon, tuna or chicken are all good sources of protein.

Other good recovery snacks include Greek yoghurt, a smoothie, a banana and pitta bread with hummus.

Refuel

Your appetite may feel depleted right after you finish your run, but it's important that you refuel within a couple of hours as it will help reduce your recovery time.
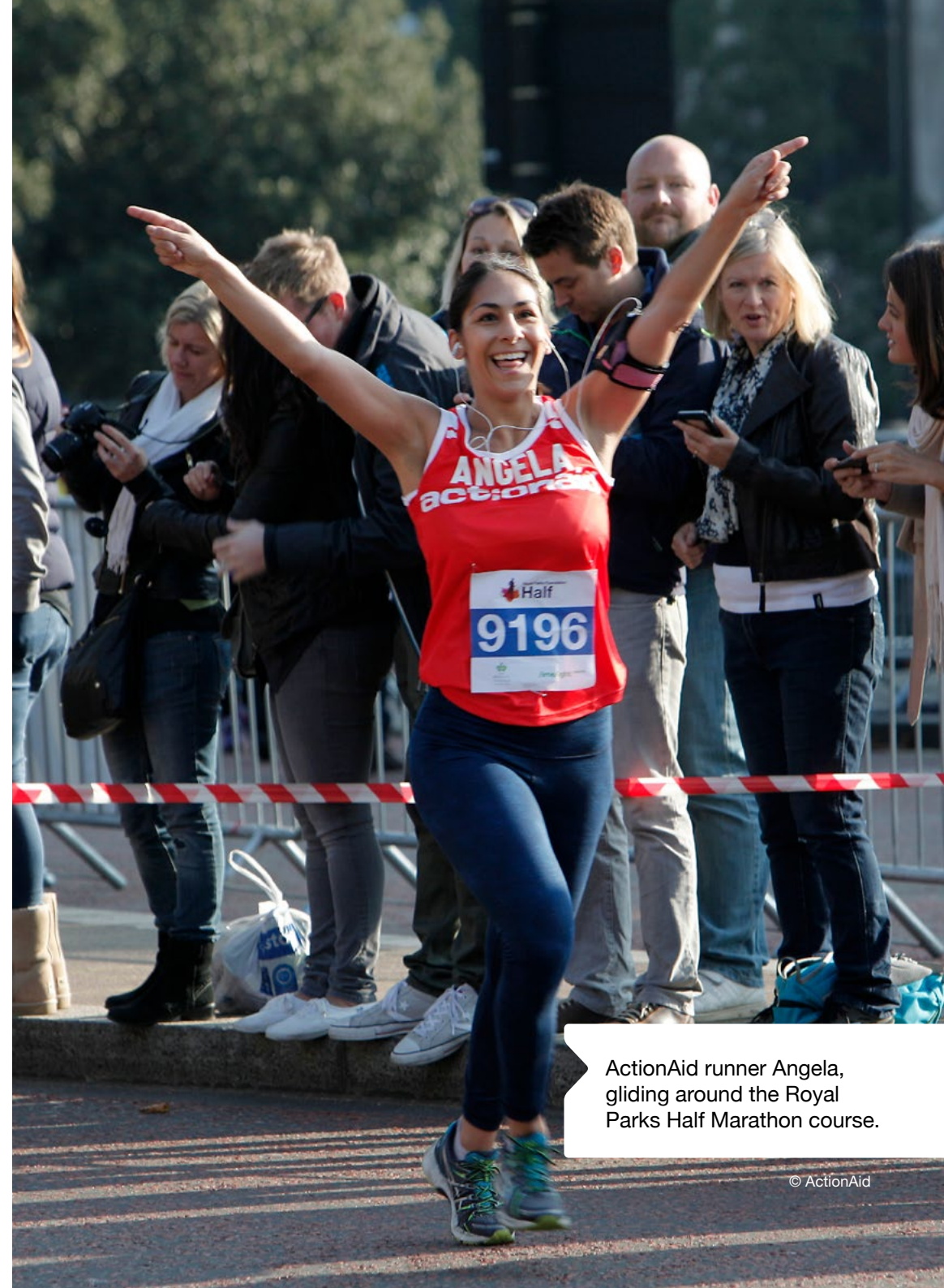
ActionAid runner Angela, gliding around the Royal Parks Half Marathon course.

© ActionAid

Staying hydrated

Staying hydrated during your run is essential, especially if the weather is warm. There's a lot of debate over how often one should drink during a long run; some experts say drink when you're thirsty, others insist you should drink every 15-20 minutes. We advise the "little and often" approach.

See what works for you during training and stick to that on the day. The colour of your urine can be a good way of telling how hydrated you are; ideally it should be clear or straw coloured.

Gita, 13, used to walk half a mile every morning to fetch water. Now, thanks to ActionAid, her school has its own well.

© Jonathan Bundu/ActionAid

What to drink

Before a race
Don't overdo the drinking – frequent small sips should be sufficient. Plain water isn't always enough during a long run, so it's good to grab a sports drink packed with electrolytes while on the move.

During a race
Smaller sips are preferable to large gulps; avoid having a 'sloshing' feeling in your stomach.

After a race
It's essential that you replace your lost fluids and electrolytes as soon as you can after your run; this will help your recovery time significantly.

As well as sports drinks like Lucozade, chocolate milk and coconut water are good post-run drinks as they contain minerals essential for rehydration.

Remember that symptoms of dehydration include disorientation, fatigue, headaches, nausea and muscle cramping, so if you experience any of them it's important that you stop and hydrate as soon as possible.

"I am happy that I now have a water well in my school and that I no longer have to walk for miles to fetch water"

Gita, 13, from Sierra Leone

The ActionAid cheer squad supporting our London Marathon 2018 team.

Good luck!

We wish you all the best of luck with your running activity and want to thank you again for choosing to support ActionAid.

Your support is making a real difference. Our dedicated local staff are changing the world with women and girls. We are ending violence and fighting poverty so that all women, everywhere, can create the future they want.

If you're yet to sign up to take part in a running event for ActionAid, visit **actionaid.org.uk/running** to find a challenge that suits your physical fitness, experience and interests.

📞 **01460 238 000**

✉️ **events@actionaid.org**

🖱️ **actionaid.org.uk/running**

FR Registered with
FUNDRAISING REGULATOR