

Ten Smart Eating Tips for Hiking Trips

The right stuff makes a big difference on hiking or backpacking trips. Having the right foods and fluids is as important as having the proper equipment and accurate maps. Eating right and staying hydrated helps maximize physical endurance and mental concentration. If you get lost or are stranded, your nutritional status might be a real lifesaver. Here are ten tasty tips for fueling your next backcountry adventure.

- 1. Start the day before:** Drink plenty of water and eat plenty of whole grains the day before a trip. This helps maximize the fluid and energy stored in your muscles.
- 2. Take time to shop for food:** Make a list and shop smart for quality trail food. Last-minute scrounging through your cupboards usually doesn't produce the best options.
- 3. Mix up a batch of trail mix:** Buy a ready-made mix or combine your favorite nuts, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, cereal, small crackers and a few chocolate bits.
- 4. Eat a high-octane breakfast:** Power your body for the day ahead with quick energy (bagels or oatmeal) and long-lasting protein (eggs, Canadian bacon or cheese).
- 5. Drink before you hit the trail:** Carry juice, low-fat milk and hot chocolate for the drive to the trailhead. Drink as much as you comfortably can before you start to hike.
- 6. Bring a backpack full of water:** The new personal hydration systems allow you to carry 70 to 100 ounces of water and to drink all you need without stopping.
- 7. Drink before you feel thirsty:** The thirst mechanism doesn't kick in until you are already partially dehydrated. Drink often and regularly -- 8 to 16 ounces every hour.
- 8. Plan for fluid emergencies:** Always have a way to purify water (pump or pills) along the way. Dehydration can be disorienting, the last thing you want on the trail.
- 9. Keep snacks ready-to-eat:** Keep trail mix or some nuts in your pockets. If you start to feel tired or cranky, don't wait for lunch. Fuel your muscles when they need it.
- 10. Pack extra food:** Difficult situations can become disasters if you don't have enough fuel to think clearly and to keep moving. Always carry an emergency supply of energy bars, nuts and jerky - above and beyond what you need for your current trip.

