

## Triathlon Fuel Management by Coach Daren

Triathlons are all about fuel management. This is particularly important in longer races. Here are a few fuel facts:

Fact # 1 - You will burn about 600 to 900 calories per hour in the swim, bike, and run. You can take in and successfully process about 200 to 300 depending on the individual athlete. So the math is not in your favor – you will be at a caloric deficit per hour from the start.

Fact # 2 - The higher your heart rate (HR) is, the more calories per hour you burn.

Fact # 3 – At low heart rates you burn a mix of fat and carbohydrates. The higher the HR goes, the more this shifts to all carbohydrates.

Fact # 4 – You have a fixed supply of carbohydrates stored in your body, maybe about 3500.

This is a simple numbers game: even with some fresh carbohydrate fuel coming in you will soon run out of fuel if you let your engine run at too high a HR since you will burn through the limited source of carbohydrates much faster than you can replenish them.

The solution is to race at a HR which will afford you to burn a mix of carbohydrates and stored fat. Even the leanest triathlete has a large supply of fat, and when used in conjunction with some stored carbohydrates and some incoming carbohydrates at a moderate HR will allow the athlete to go a long, long time. This magic HR can be determined in a lab setting, like the Meredith College Human Performance Lab, and by trial and error in training. Exceeding this HR for too long results in fuel depletion, and ‘bonking’...not what we want to do out on the race course.

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# Triathlon