

Getting Ready for Pedal4Prostate

Before jumping into workouts or increasing the amount of time you're spending on a bicycle, there are some tasks and purchases to check off first. Take your bike to a shop. Get a tune-up and replace worn parts (potentially brake pads, tyres, chain etc.) so your bike is ready to go.

Consider getting a bike fit. Training stresses the body and optimising the way you sit on the bike helps you ride comfortably and reduces injury risk. A good bike fit can eliminate or prevent numbness in the hands, soreness in the neck and shoulders, and pain in the lower back and knees. Gear up - you don't have to kit up like a pro, but padded cycling shorts are essential. Cycling seats don't have a lot of padding because they are designed to work with padded shorts. For other apparel, avoid cotton, stick with moisture-wicking fabrics, and use layers so you can adjust for temperature changes.

GETTING READY

Your First Week of Training

Ride your bike more than you did last week. If you haven't been riding a bicycle regularly, start by riding three to five times for 30-60 minutes each time. If you've been riding recreationally or for transportation, figure out a ballpark for how much time (not mileage) you've been riding on a weekly basis. Don't worry about going hard. Don't go from zero to four high-intensity spin classes on week one. Don't start with intensity - start with volume and add intensity later. Your pace on the bike should be conversational, meaning you could speak in full sentences to someone riding with you. When training for events, you must be patient and take your time. Your body can adapt very quickly but there is a limit. If you ride too far, too frequently, you can make yourself very tired. As the training will increase the stress on your body, it is important that you only concentrate on increasing endurance at a time when your lifestyle is not adding increased stress on your body (e.g. meeting work deadlines, exams or moving house).

Your First Month of Training

If you were not riding regularly before, starting to train should be by building volume and increasing weekly riding time by 10% each week, over the course of 3-6 rides. Take a rest day - no training - at least one day out of seven. Many athletes quickly reach the weekly maximum number of hours they can devote to training, some within the first month. This is particularly true for athletes who were riding regularly. If you're more comfortable training indoors, or the time you have available for training requires you to be indoors, you can still engage with the cycling community through apps like Strava or Zwift (try these sub 60-minute indoor cycling workouts). These apps are fitness trackers as well as social platforms, and help athletes measure their progress and stay accountable to their training goals.

Training Plan

Whether you are a novice or a competitive racer, you can still use the same weekly guidelines. This is because you are adding percentages and time onto your personal level of endurance. The more often you ride, the greater increase you will be making. Even if you only ride three times a week, you can still improve your endurance but the benefits you will gain in three weeks will be smaller.

Listen to your body. As you start and continue your training, you will expect to feel slightly fatigued, and your muscles may ache after training. Gentle stretching is important after exercise. If any tenderness or discomfort does not go away after rest, consult medical advice. If you experience any sudden pain, tightness in the chest or breathlessness, consult medical advice immediately.

Key points

- * Set yourself a goal
- * Be realistic and not over ambitious at first
- * Ride at a pace that's comfortable. If you're feeling stressed, slow down
- * Remember to eat and have something to drink on your ride
- * Make sure that your position and riding equipment is suitable
- * Have incremental increases to your distances, but remember to include "easy rides"
- * Ride in varied terrain

HYDRATE

Fluid intake is especially important during training. It is vital to drink plenty of water before and after exercise sessions - aim to drink two litres of water per day. Try to reduce your intake of tea, coffee, sugary drinks and alcohol.

NOURISH

Increase your intake of fruit and vegetables high in vitamins A, C and E as they contain antioxidants, which help to reduce toxin build up in the body. Eat lots of the following:

- * Non citrus fruits such as strawberries, cherries and pears
- * Brightly coloured vegetables such as peppers, carrots and aubergines
- * Green vegetables, especially broccoli, courgettes and spinach

Healthy eating needn't be "fat free", we need fat in our diet to remain healthy. We need carbohydrates in our diet, and we need fibre too. At the end of the day, it's a question of balance. Leading up to your bike challenge, you should try to follow a healthy balanced diet. The training is very physically demanding, so you will need to increase your calorie intake. Food choices are important when training for any fitness challenge and whether you are looking at your bike challenge as a fun day out or a race against the clock, subtle changes to what you eat, and drink will help to improve your performance and help keep you healthy so you can train regularly and also recover afterwards.

You may need to experiment with forms of energy to take on board during the ride. There are many different options ranging from premixed sports drinks to powdered energy gels and bars. Use a variety on your training sessions and find the one that suits you and your stomach best. You need to also get used to drinking and snacking while riding - most people "hit the wall" because they are simply dehydrated. Work on a steady intake of one litre per hour of cycling. Don't try anything new on race day, race on what your body is used to only.