Cycling
Training, Health, and Fitness Guide

A quick-start resource for all levels of coaches.

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Partially sourced from: Special Olympics International Cycling Coaching Guide
HEALTH and FITNESS TALK

Suggestions for including a focus on year-round health and wellness in your sports practice.

“To be a great athlete, you need to be a healthy athlete.”

These discussions are laid out in balance, order, and accordance with Special Olympics Montana’s 8 weeks – 10 hours practice requirements. An included practice plan, which shows how these discussions can fit in a practice, is included in this same packet.

The goal of Health and Fitness Talk is to support the health, fitness, growth, and success of Special Olympics Montana competitors. It is designed to be used as a part of your practice season. The following discussions will provide competitors with the introductory knowledge to begin thought processes on:

- Identifying nutritious choices
- Balancing nutrition and portions
- Making healthy and balanced snack and meals choices
- The importance of hydration
- Identifying unhealthy beverage choices
- Understanding endurance and strength
- Understanding flexibility and balance
- Understanding the benefits and fun of exercise

If you are interested in a more in-depth Health and Fitness Program, explanations, examples, and lesson plans/guides, reach out to the Special Olympics Montana Senior Director of Innovation at 406-216-5327.

Practice Week #1 Discussion: NUTRITION: Eating right is important to your health and your sports performance. Eating right can be easy and enjoyable because there are many delicious healthy choices. Your goal is to eat at least 5 total fruits and vegetables every day!

Tell your teammate the names of some Fruits:
- Fresh: Apples, Bananas, Berries, Grapes, Kiwi, Oranges
- Frozen Fruits
- Canned fruits (pick options with no added sugar)
- Dried fruits: Raisins, Bananas, Apricots

Tell your teammate the names of some Vegetables:
- Fresh: Asparagus, Broccoli, Carrots, Cauliflower, Green Beans, Peppers, Squash
- Lettuces and Dark Leafy Greens
- Frozen Vegetables
- Salads
- Canned Vegetables
-What fruits can you have for breakfast? Lunch?
-What vegetables can you have for lunch? Dinner?

You know fruits and vegetables are important for your health, but sometimes it can be difficult to know what other foods you should be eating. Here is a list of the other food groups and some great choices in each group that make up a healthy meal or diet.

**Grains:**
- Brown or Wild, or Unpolished Rice
- Oatmeal
- Whole Grain Bread
- Whole Grain Pasta
- Whole Grain Crackers
- Tortilla
- Flatbread

**Diary:**
- Low-fat or Skim Milk
- Low-fat Cheese
- Low-fat, unsweetened yogurt (watch the sugar!)
- Cottage Cheese

**Meats and Beans (Protein):**
- Lean Meats
- Eggs
- Fish (frozen, fresh or canned)
- Nuts
- Beans

-Tell your partner the Grains you ate yesterday. Dairy?
-Share with a teammate what protein (Meats & Beans) you had last night for dinner.

**Practice Week #2 Discussion:** **BUILDING A HEALTHY PLATE:** From last time, you now know what types of foods to eat. Here is how to build a healthy plate for a meal or for a snack.

- Watch the amounts of food you put on your plate (share/discuss the “Perfect Portions” diagram below).
- Save junk food like desserts, chips and sodas for special occasions.
- Make half of your plate fruits or vegetables (see diagram below).
- Fill the other half with foods like whole grains, dairy, and protein.
- Add more fruits and vegetables to your meals.
- Keep snacks healthy and small.

-Tell your teammate how to build a healthy plate.
-Name the 4 food groups that should make up a healthy meal.
Here is a fun way to remember how much to eat when you have a serving. The size of sports equipment on the left is about the same size as one serving of the foods on the right.

- **Baseball** = 1 serving of fruit
- **Bocce** = 1 serving of pasta
- **Hool** = 1 serving of nuts
- **Horse** = 1/2 serving of meat
- **Pin** = 1/2 serving of fruit

**Make half of your plate fruits or vegetables.**

**Fill the other half with foods like whole grains, dairy, and protein.**
Practice Week #3 Discussion: **HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS:** Snacking is a great way to make sure you are full of energy. It is important to keep your snacks healthy. Here are a few ideas for tasty snacks that are packed with fruits and vegetables.

- Apple slices dipped in peanut butter
- Low-fat unsweetened yogurt with berries
- Low-fat cottage cheese with tomatoes
- Carrots or peppers dipped in hummus
- Celery topped with peanut butter and raisins

-What snacks do you like the most? Are these healthy snacks or junk food snacks?
-Tell your partner a healthy snack you could make for yourself.

-Are these healthy snacks (thumbs up) or junk food snacks (thumbs down)?
  - Doritos
  - Banana with peanut butter
  - Snickers candy bar
  - A half cup of nuts
  - Carrot sticks
  - A cookie

**HEALTHY MEALS:** Add more fruits and vegetables to your meals. You can make any meal more nutritious with these simple suggestions.

**Breakfast**
- Have a piece of fruit with your meal.
- Vegetables like spinach, tomatoes, onions, and peppers make great toppings on omelettes.
- Dried or cut fruit make great toppings on cereal and oatmeal as well.

**Lunch**
- Top sandwiches with plenty of vegetables like lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and sprouts.
- Try apples, carrots, or celery for a crunchy side.
- Add leftover or canned vegetables like peas and carrots to soups.
- Make a salad with your choice of meat, cheese, lots of vegetables, and an oil-based dressing.

**Dinner**
- Add vegetables like broccoli, squash, or peppers to pastas.
- Make a stir-fry with brown rice, your favorite lean meat or seafood, and vegetables.
- Add a side of steamed vegetables or a salad to any meal.
- Have some fruit as a healthy dessert.
-What healthy items can you add to a salad (carrots, tomatoes, sunflower seeds, etc.)?
-Do you like oatmeal? What can add to oatmeal (banana, blueberries, etc.)
-Tell you partner how are you doing with the goal of having half your plate be fruits and vegetables.

**Reach Your Fit 5 Nutrition Goal**

*It's easy to eat 5 fruits and vegetables in one day.* Follow this sample meal plan and see how easy it is to reach your goal.

**Practice Week #4 Discussion: HYDRATION:** Water is another important fuel for sports and for life. Drinking the right amount of water is important for your health and can also help your athletic performance.

**Your goal is to drink 5 bottles of water every day!** Your water bottle should be 16-20oz or 500-600ml. Drink out of a sports water bottle to track your water intake. Sports bottles are refillable and can hold 16-20oz or 500-600ml of water.

-Do you have a water bottle? Do you take it with you when you go places? Do you bring it with you to practice?
-Are you drinking water with your meals?

**SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION:** Water helps to keep your body working properly. You lose water when you go to the bathroom, sweat, exercise or even breathe. If you lose too much water without drinking more, your body won’t work as well. This is called **dehydration**.
Signs of Dehydration:
- You feel thirsty
- You are tired or sluggish
- You have a headache
- Your mouth is dry
- Your urine is dark yellow or brown

-Tell your teammate two of the signs of dehydration.
-Have you ever been dehydrated? How did you know? How did you feel?

Practice Week #5 Discussion: HEALTHY BEVERAGE CHOICES: There are many beverage options available, but some of them are healthier choices than others. This guide can help you make the best choices to stay hydrated and perform your best.

-What is your favorite thing to drink? How often do you drink it (most days, sometimes, special occasions)?
-What is the best thing to drink (water)? Why (no sugar)?

Sodas, energy drinks, and sports drinks are NOT good beverage choices.
Sodas, energy drinks, and sports drinks have extra sugar and can make you gain weight. Energy drinks and many sodas also have caffeine. Caffeine does not help you stay hydrated.

Moderate amounts of low-fat milk and 100% juice are also good choices in small amounts.
Low-fat milk and 100% fruit juice are good choices with meals. Keep serving sizes small. No more than 3 cups of milk and 1 cup of juice per day.

Water is the best choice for a beverage!
Drink water every day! If you like flavored drinks, try sparkling water or add a few pieces of fruit into your water bottle.
You might consider bringing in some beverages and having your athletes look at the number of grams of sugar in each one. The athletes could count out the number of sugar cubes represented in each drink.

4 grams of sugar = 1 sugar cube

How does it make you feel knowing that there are 10 teaspoons of sugar in a can of Coke?

Do sports drinks like Gatorade have sugar in them? TV ads don’t tell you that, do they?
Practice Week #6 Discussion: **EXERCISE- Endurance & Strength**: You can become a better athlete by enjoying physical activity outside of your sports practice. There are many ways to be physically active. Certain exercises can help you improve the skills needed for your sport. **Your goal is to do at least 5 days of exercise every week!**

*Types of Exercise: ENDURANCE STRENGTH FLEXIBILITY BALANCE*

**Endurance**

Endurance is the ability of your body to keep moving for long periods of time. Endurance can help you run farther distances without stopping and practice longer with fewer breaks.

Try your favorite endurance exercise for 30 minutes, 5 days each week.
- Is dancing exercise? (Yes, endurance.)
- Running, biking, and swimming are examples of what type of exercise? (Endurance)
- Push-ups and sit-ups are what kind of exercise? (Strength)
- What exercise do you do for endurance? Strength?

**Practice Week #7 Discussion: EXERCISE- Flexibility & Balance:**

**Flexibility** is the ability of your body to move easily in all directions. Being flexible makes it easier to do sports skills and helps prevent injuries to your muscles and joints!

**Balance** is the ability of your body to stay upright or stay in control of your movements. Balance helps you to stay in control when you are playing sports and helps you to avoid falls.
Flexibility is the ability of your body to move easily in all directions. Being flexible makes it easier to do sports skills and helps prevent injuries to your muscles and joints!

Try to complete a stretch for all body parts, 2-3 days each week!

Balance is the ability of your body to stay upright or stay in control of your movements. Balance helps you to stay in control when you are playing sports and helps you to avoid falls.

Try to complete a full body balance workout, 2-3 days each week!
Practice Week #8 Discussion: EXERCISE IS FUN!

Doing exercise together is a fun way to socialize with friends and family.

- How many of you could walk with a friend after school or work? Attend an exercise or fitness class? Bike on a trail? Take a walk with your mom or dad?
- What is a new exercise you would like to try?
- Share your exercise goal with a partner.

The diagrams in this document are from the Special Olympics Fit 5 Guide.

Other resources:

- NCHPAD.org This website has lots of health resources for people with disabilities. They have articles, videos, and even workout plans.
- ChooseMyPlate.org This website has it all! Learn how many servings of each food group you need, track your eating to see if you are eating healthy, and even find links to healthy recipes.
- EatRight.org This website also has loads of nutrition information, healthy recipes, and even a section to find a dietitian in your area.
- Heart.org (click on the heading, “Getting Healthy”) The American Heart Association has great resources for leading a healthy lifestyle, including a nutrition center with tons of recipes and cooking videos for heart-healthy recipes.
- Diabetes.org (click on the heading, “Food & Fitness”) The American Diabetes Association has lots of great articles for people who have diabetes. There are also many diabetes friendly recipes!
Warm-Up

A warm-up period is the first part of every training session or preparation for competition. The warm-up starts slowly and gradually involves all muscles and body parts. In addition to preparing the athlete mentally, warming up also has several physiological benefits.

The importance of a warm-up prior to exercise cannot be overstressed. Warming up raises the body temperature and prepares the muscles, nervous system, tendons, ligaments and cardiovascular system for upcoming stretches and exercises. The chances of injury are greatly reduced by increasing muscle elasticity.

Warming Up:
- Raises body temperature
- Increases metabolic rate
- Increases heart and respiratory rate
- Prepares the muscles and nervous system for exercise

The warm-up is tailored for the activity to follow. The intensity and duration of the warm-up should also depend on the activity you are warming up for. The shorter the event, the more intense the warm-up. The longer the event, such as a road race, the less intense the warm-up needs to be.

Warm-ups consist of active motion leading up to more vigorous motion to elevate heart, respiratory and metabolic rates. The total warm-up period takes at least 25 minutes and immediately precedes the training or competition. The effects of a warm-up can last up to 20 minutes. If there is a delay in starting the activity beyond 20 minutes, the warm-up may lose its benefit. A warm-up period will include the following basic sequence and components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Time (minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow aerobic walk/ fast walk/ run/ easy spin</td>
<td>Heat muscles</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretching</td>
<td>Increase range of movement</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event specific drills</td>
<td>Coordination preparation for training/competition</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aerobic Warm-Up
The aerobic warm-up includes activities such as brisk walking, light jogging, walking while doing arm circles, jumping jacks, cycling on a stationary trainer or easy cycling.

Walking
Walking is the first exercise of an athlete’s routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by walking at a gradually increasing pace for 5 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The sole objective of the warm-up is to circulate the blood and warm the muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity.

Cycling
Cycling is the next exercise in an athlete’s routine. Athletes begin warming the muscles by cycling without getting out of breath for 5-10 minutes. This circulates the blood through all the muscles, thus providing them greater flexibility for stretching. The bike ride starts out slowly, and then gradually increases in speed; however, the athlete never reaches even 50 percent of maximum effort by the end of the ride. Remember, the sole objective of this phase of the warm-up is
circulating the blood and warming the bike-specific muscles in preparation for more strenuous activity. Using a stationary trainer is an efficient way to warm up.

If the athlete is preparing for a short-distance time trial or a sprint, then he/she should do several anaerobic “jumps” on the bike prior to the event. The athlete should be out of breath and perspiring after the final stages of warm-up. If not properly prepared for the event, the athlete may find that he/she is not able to adapt to the physical requirements of the exertion of the event. Pre-stressing the body can be critical to performance. The issue for you as a coach is knowing what is too much preparation and what is too little.

Stretching
Stretching is one of the most critical parts of the warm-up and an athlete’s performance. A more flexible muscle is a stronger and healthier muscle. A stronger and healthier muscle responds better to exercise and activities and helps prevent injury. Please refer to the Stretching section, below, for more in-depth information.

Event Specific Drills
Drills are segments of the sport activity that, when separate and focused upon, allow the athlete to perfect technique. Incorporating drills in the warm-up 1) allows the athlete to work on specific muscle groups recruited for the activity at a lower intensity level and 2) allows the athlete to be fresh when completing the tasks by removing obstacles such as fatigue (physical and mental), which will create a greater environment for improvement.

Progressions of learning start at a low ability level, advance to an intermediate level, and finally, reach a high ability level. Encourage each athlete to advance to the highest possible level. Drills can be combined with warm-up and lead into specific skill development.

Skills are taught and reinforced through repetition of a small segment of the skill to be performed. Many times, the actions are exaggerated in order to strengthen the muscles that perform the skill. Each coaching session should take the athlete through the entire progression so that he/she is exposed to all of the skills that make up an event.
Special Olympics Cycling Coaching Guide
Teaching Cycling Skills

Stretching
Flexibility is critical to an athlete’s optimal performance in both training and competition. Flexibility is achieved through stretching. Stretching follows an easy warm-up at the start of a training session or competition. The athletes should never stretch “cold”… their muscles and joints should always be warmed up prior to stretching.

Begin with an easy stretch to the point of tension, and hold this position for 15-30 seconds until the pull lessens. When the tension eases, slowly move further into the stretch until tension is again felt. Hold this new position for an additional 15 seconds. Each stretch should be repeated four or five times on each side of the body.

It is important to continue to breathe while stretching. As you lean into the stretch, exhale. Once the stretching point is reached, keep inhaling and exhaling while holding the stretch. Stretching should be a part of everyone’s daily life. Regular, daily stretching has been demonstrated to have the following effects:

1. Increase the length of the muscle-tendon unit
2. Increase joint range of motion
3. Reduce muscle tension
4. Develop body awareness
5. Promote increased circulation
6. Make you feel good

Cycling involves the unconscious coordination of complimentary muscle pairs. In order for the muscles to be efficient, one group of muscles must relax while the opposing group of muscles contracts and does work. If the muscles are tight or short, they will not relax and will conflict or “fight” the working muscles. The primary groups in cycling are the quadriceps and the hamstrings of the legs.

Important focus areas for stretching for cycling are:

- Quadriceps
- Hamstrings
- Calves
- Achilles
- Low back
- Neck and arms

Some athletes, such as those with Down Syndrome, may have low muscle tone that makes them appear more flexible. Be careful to not allow these athletes to stretch beyond a normal, safe range. Several stretches are dangerous to perform for all athletes, and should never be part of a safe stretching program. Unsafe stretches include the following:

- Neck Backward Bending
- Trunk Backward Bending
- Spinal Roll
Stretching is effective only if the stretch is performed accurately. Athletes need to focus on correct body positioning and alignment. Take the calf stretch, for example. Many athletes do not keep the feet forward, in the direction that they are running.

![Incorrect Calf Stretch](image1)

![Correct Calf Stretch](image2)

Another common fault in stretching is bending the back in an attempt to get a better stretch from the hips. An example is a simple sitting forward leg stretch.

![Incorrect Forward Leg Stretch](image3)

![Correct Forward Leg Stretch](image4)

In this guide, we will focus on some basic stretches for major muscle groups. We will start at the top of the body and work our way to the legs and feet.
Upper Body

Chest Opener

- Clasp hands behind back
- Palms facing in
- Push hands toward sky

Side Stretch

- Raise arms over head
- Clasp forearms
- Bend to one side

Side Arm Stretch

- Raise arms over head
- Clasp hands, palms up
- Push hands toward sky

If the athlete is unable to clasp the hands, he/she can still get a good stretch by pushing the hands to the sky, like the athlete above.
Triceps Stretch

Raise both arms over head
Bend right arm, bring hand to back
Grasp elbow of bent arm and pull gently toward the middle of the back
Repeat with other arm

Shoulder Triceps Stretch

Take elbow into hand
Pull to opposite shoulder
Arm may be straight or bent

Chest Stretch

Clasp hands behind neck
Push elbows back
Keep the back straight and tall

This is a simple stretch that the athletes may not feel a lot when stretching. However, it opens up the chest and inner shoulder areas, preparing the chest and arms for the workout.
Low Back & Glutes

Crossed Ankle Stretch

Sit, legs outstretched and crossed at ankles
Reach extended arms in front of body

Groin Stretch

Sit, bottoms of feet touching
Hold feet/ankles
Bend forward from hips
Ensure that the athlete is pulling up in his lower back

Here, the back and shoulders are rounded. The athlete is not bending from his hips and is not getting the maximum benefit of the stretch

Here, the athlete is correctly bringing his chest to his feet and not pulling his toes toward his body

Hip Rolls

Lie on back, arms outstretched
Bring knees to chest
Slowly drop knees to left (exhale)
Bring knees back to chest (inhale)
Slowly drop knees to right (exhale)

Work on keeping the knees together to get the full stretch through the buttocks
Supine Hamstring Stretch

Lie on back, legs outstretched
Alternating legs, bring legs to chest
Bring both legs to chest at the same time

Spine Curl

Lie on back
Bring left knee to chest
Lift head and shoulders to knee
Alternate legs

Downward Facing Dog

–Toes

Kneel, hands directly under shoulders, knees under hips
Lift heels until standing on toes
Slowly lower heels to ground
Continue alternating up and down slowly

Downward Facing Dog – Flat Footed

Drop heels to ground
Excellent stretch for the lower back

Downward Facing Dog – Alternating Legs

Alternate raising to toes with one leg up, while keeping the other foot flat on ground
Excellent stretch to prevent and help shin splints
**Lower Body**

**Calf Stretch**

Stand facing wall/fence
Bend forward leg slightly
Bend ankle of back leg

**Calf Stretch w/Bent Knee**

Bend both knees to ease strain

**Hamstring Stretch**

Legs straight out and together
Legs are not locked
Bend at hips, reach toward ankles
As flexibility increases, reach for feet
Push out through the heels, forcing toes to the sky

**Seated Straddle Stretch**

Legs straddled, bend at hips
Reach out toward the middle
Keep the back straight
Correct alignment of the lead leg is important in a hurdle stretch. The foot must be aligned in the forward direction of running.

- Sit with legs outstretched, bend knee, touch bottom of foot to opposite thigh
- Toes of the straight leg are flexed toward sky
- Push out through the heel, forcing toes to the sky
- Bend at hips in nice easy stretch, reaching toward the feet or ankles
- Bring chest to knee
**Step Ups**

- Step onto support, with bent leg
- Push hips in, toward support

**Standing Hamstring Stretch**

- Rest heel of foot
- Push chest/shoulders in and up

**Forward Bend**

- Stand, arms outstretched overhead
- Slowly bend at waist
- Bring hands to ankle or shin level without strain
- Point fingers toward feet
Stretching - Quick Reference Guidelines

Start Relaxed
Do not begin until athletes are relaxed and muscles are warm

Be Systematic
Start at the top of body and work your way down

Progress from General to Specific
Start general, then move into event specific exercises

Easy Stretching before Developmental
Make slow, progressive stretches
Do not bounce or jerk to stretch farther

Use Variety
Make it fun, use different exercises to work the same muscles

Breathe Naturally
Do not hold your breath, stay calm and relaxed

Allow for Individual Differences
Athletes start and progress at different levels

Stretch Regularly
Always include time for warm-up and cool-down
Stretch at home
Elements of a safe and successful practice

- Check area for safety hazards
- Warmup
- Stretching
- Skills practice
- Competitive/fun session
- Cool down
- Wrap-up and conclusion
- HYDRATE!!!
- *Elements can be added and subtracted, as desired*

1 hour practice plan example

- 8:30-8:55 – Coach arrives and checks area for safety hazards.
- 8:55-9:00 – Walking or jogging to warm-up muscles.
- 9:00-9:10 – Stretching
- 9:10-9:25 – Skills practice
- 9:25-9:30 – Water break
- 9:30-9:40 – Skill practice
- 9:40-9:50 – Competitive/fun session
- 9:50-9:55 – Cool down
- 9:55-10:00 – Wrap-up and conclusion