

Eat & Drink Safely in a Group

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A serious problem can develop in a fast group on a long ride: You get so focused on sticking with the peline that you're too busy, or too stressed, to eat and drink.

Suddenly you're bonking -- dehydrated, low on energy and struggling to maintain the pace. This can even be dangerous because a fatigued rider is a squirrely rider.

Here's how to keep the calories going down, even in close quarters with fast company:

- **Do your dining in the caboose.** Sitting at the back of the group or line lets you take on food and fluids without concern. There's no one beside or behind to get tangled with if you make a wayward movement or drop a bottle.
- **Use your bottle without looking down.** Keep your eyes on the riders and road ahead. Grip the bar on top near the stem for stability, then use your other hand to grasp the bottle in the fat part just below the top. Put it to the corner of your mouth and raise it to the side so it doesn't obscure forward vision.

If you think about the path your hand travels as you take out the bottle, it's relatively easy to reverse it without looking down. If necessary, use your thumb (grasping the bottle) to feel for the side of the cage. Then center the bottle and slide it in. Practice will make this automatic.

- **Prepare your food for easy access.** If you're at the back and comfortable riding no-hands, simply sit up after taking a bar from your pocket, open the wrapper and start eating. Hold it in one hand and put the other on the bar top near the stem.

If you don't like to ride no-hands or expect wind or other conditions to make it risky, open bars and other food before the ride. Then use one hand and your teeth to do the rest on the move.