



Melbourne Summer Cycle - Training Tips

By Lynn Gunning on behalf of the Cycling Promotion Fund

The 40km Melbourne Summer Cycle is a great opportunity for the whole family to get out on their bikes and enjoy a ride through the streets of Melbourne.

Cycling is a fantastic, low impact way to improve your cardiovascular fitness while building muscular strength and endurance. You get to appreciate the great outdoors and catch up with friends at the same time – so it can be very social, great fun and good stress relief. Regardless of your age, ability or level of fitness, cycling offers an easy and accessible way to increase your overall health and wellbeing.

Getting Started

If you have got yourself a brand new bike, or if you haven't been on a bike for a while, it's important that you start out gradually and build up your mileage. If it's been a few months or years since you last exercised, it is a good idea to see your doctor and get a check up.

Your bike may also need a check-up if it's been gathering dust in the back of the shed. Take it to a bike shop and get it serviced to ensure you'll have a smooth ride.

It's also essential that you check your positioning on the bike (for example, your seat height and how far forward you are leaning). If you start to feel sore during or after a ride, this is often an indication that something is not adjusted right for you. A bike shop can help you with this.

Never leave home without a pump, puncture repair kit and a spare tube so you don't get stuck. If you have never repaired or changed a tube before, get someone who rides regularly to show you how. Also carry your mobile in case you need assistance and some money so you can catch a train home if you cannot fix your bike on the spot.

Have a water bottle holder fitted to your bike and always carry water. Drink regularly, especially in hot weather. It is also a good idea to take snacks with you, such as a banana or muesli bars, in case you get hungry.

Hydrating in Hot Weather

With an event date of 22 February you will be training for the ride across the hottest months. Working up a sweat is easy to do under hot conditions and it is important that the sweat lost is replaced quickly. Regular fluid replacement helps to maintain appropriate levels of hydration and ensure you can keep performing at your peak.

Why is dehydration a concern?

Water makes up around 70% of the body. Blood consists predominately of water and when fluid levels in the body drop, so does the amount of blood. As the volume of blood decreases, there is less blood to deliver oxygen to the working muscles and your heart has to beat faster to maintain the same amount of work.

Sweat loss is one of the main sources of heat loss from the body. In hot conditions, you rely on sweat evaporating from your skin to keep your body cool. If you become dehydrated, there is less sweat available to cool your body and you become at risk of overheating. This can lead to dizziness, fainting and nausea and in extreme cases muscle tissue damage.

What's more, dehydration has been shown to reduce mental function and impair co-ordination - all of which will reduce your ability to ride effectively.



What is the best way to replace fluid losses?

It is vital to get into the habit of drinking regularly. Thirst is a poor indicator of dehydration. Unfortunately, by the time you feel thirsty, you're already dehydrated. You have to consciously drink before you get thirsty.

The natural choice to rehydrate is water. It's cheap and readily available. However, not everyone likes the taste of water and these people often stop drinking before they are adequately hydrated.

Top tips for beat dehydration

1. Drink regularly – don't wait till you're thirsty
2. Drink small amounts often. As a rough guide drink 150-200ml every 10-15 minutes
3. Cool drinks are more palatable and absorbed more quickly from the stomach than drinks at room temperature
4. Save the beer and coffee until well after the event.

Get into the habit of drinking regularly, especially during hot weather, as it is easy to become dehydrated without being aware. Good hydration will decrease your risk of suffering from heat illnesses and will help keep you performing at your peak.

Warming Up

At the beginning of each ride, it's a good idea to spend the first five to ten minutes riding in a low gear at a steady pace to help increase the blood flow and hence 'warm up' your working muscles (predominantly your leg muscles). Small gears refer to gears that are easier to ride in (usually you would be on a small ring at the front and a large ring at the back). Big gears are the reverse (big at front and small at the rear) and are the ones that you have to work your legs very hard to get moving.

Riding a few blocks down to the designated corner to meet up with your friends or down to your local bike path will be a good warm up. It is useful to include a few stretches if you are standing around waiting for a friend – try swinging your arms or doing some light torso rotations.

Riding

When riding on shared paths be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary and use your bell to alert other path users and pass on the right.

When riding in traffic remember to ride at least a metre from the kerb or parked cars, you are more visible and are able to avoid debris and broken glass. If there are no marked bike lanes, take a lane and make traffic go around you. Try to wear bright coloured clothing to improve your visibility.

It is a good idea to learn how to use your gears properly. Being in the correct gear makes riding much easier and helps you conserve energy. Smooth gear changes reduce the chance of you losing speed. Be aware of when you are starting to slow down or speed up and need to change gears accordingly. Always change down to easier gears coming up to roundabout, traffic lights or give way signs, then if you have to stop, you won't be in your hardest gears when taking off. It's a good idea to change down when coming up to a hill, too. Avoid 'grinding' away in low gears – this often generates much more muscular fatigue in your legs and can cause you to lose efficiency. When you're starting out, try to ride with someone, as it will help keep you motivated.

Cooling down

A warm down after your ride will help bring your heart rate back down and some static stretching – concentrating on your lower back and legs - can help reduce muscle tightness. It is also a good time to top up your fluid levels and replenish your fuel stores with nutrient-rich carbohydrates.



Riding with MS

It is now well accepted that exercise is beneficial for people living with MS. It helps to maintain and increase your health, improve your psychological well-being and decrease some secondary complications of MS.

The key thing for people with MS is to be aware that they may become fatigued quickly therefore it is very important to pace yourself and take regular rest breaks.

Another factor to consider given the time of year the event is being conducted is the impact of heat intolerance. If the conditions are going to be very hot, it may be preferable to reduce the distance ridden. Make sure that you have a friend or family member ride with you to monitor how you are going.

Potential Training Rides

Bayside Path

This picturesque beachside bike path extends 23km from Beacon Cove to Ricketts Point. It can be a great day ride, or can be broken into shorter return sections to Brighton Beach (20km return) or Black Rock (30km return). For one-way public transport rides, ride the 4km from Flinders Street Station to Beacon Cove via the light rail path and catch a train back from either Brighton Beach or Sandringham. There are numerous eateries right beside the path include the Beacon Cove Food Store, St Kilda Pier Kiosk, North Road Pavilion, and of course the Ricketts Point Tea House.

Yarra Trail

If bushland and river views are more your style, you can ride up the Yarra River from Flinders Street station all the way to Westerfolds Park, then along the Diamond Creek Path to Eltham. The total distance is 41km, and the ride is all off-road with only minor ups and downs. You can stop along the way at Collingwood Children's Farm, admire Dights Falls, or visit Heide Museum of Modern Art at Banksia Park. There are attractive picnic spots along this path, as well as cafes at the Fairfield Boathouse, Heide, Westerfolds Park and Eltham. For a shorter ride finish at Heidelberg, a little over half way.

Capital City Trail

At Dights Falls you can opt for a circuit ride of 30km and instead of continuing along the Yarra take the path along Merri Creek. This continues right out to the Ring Road, but use the underpass at Rushall Station to turn west along the old Inner Circle Rail Line through the inner northern suburbs. Nicholson and Lygon Sts both offer a good selection of cafes not too far from the trail. After crossing Flemington Bridge head downstream alongside Moonee Ponds Creek to Footscray Rd. Cross and turn left to ride past Docklands, and more tempting eateries. You can then catch a train home from Spencer St.

Many local bicycle user groups have regularly rides you may like to join. It provides a great opportunity for you to get used cycling in a group.



8 week beginners training program for 40km ride

Week	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total km
1		5		10		10		25
2		5		10		15		30
3		10		10		25		45
4 (Rest)		5		5		15		25
5		10		10		25		45
6		10		10		30		50
7		10		10		35		55
8 Event		10		5			40	55

Note: If you are only able to train once Mon-Fri and twice on weekends, do the Tuesday session on Sunday and try to do the Thursday session on Wednesday. If you are riding with children on weekends, but alone on weekdays, try to do your harder sessions when you are alone (ie. do the Saturday intensity in your Tuesday ride for weeks 1, 2 and 6.)

Intensity

Low – an easy session focussing on keeping your legs spinning quickly. You should be able to chat easily.

Moderate – an even pace holding a higher heart rate. You will be puffing quite a bit. You can still chat, but not as comfortably.

Moderately Hard – solid session where it is hard to talk and you should feel quite tired at the end. These workouts are really good for improving your fitness level.

For more cycling tips and information visit: www.rideabike.com.au

Many local bicycle user groups have regularly rides you may like to join. It provides a great opportunity for you to get used cycling in a group. To find a Bicycle User Group or Club near you, follow this link: http://www.cyclingpromotion.com.au/component/option.com_cpf/Itemid,0/state,vic/

The Cycling Promotion Fund is a proud supporter of the Melbourne Summer Cycle