

Meningitis
now

Training Guide

100 mile cycle





So, you've signed up for a 100 mile cycle event?

Once a distance only associated with the elite but becoming more prominent due to events such as the Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100, 100-mile sportives are certainly not a small challenge to undertake. Cycling a century takes a large amount of physical and mental training and preparation - but don't panic! By breaking your training down into manageable chunks, you'll be giving yourself a great chance of achieving your goal, whether it's cycling in your first ever event or beating your personal best. Don't be put off by something that's further ahead in the plan than you are; whatever stage you're at now, you're not expected to be where you want to be before you've even started!

This guide will talk you through everything you'll need to get you race-ready, including:

- Gear** What equipment, clothing and accessories to look for
- Fuel** Tips and recommendations for nutrition and hydration
- Race week** What you can expect in the run-up to, and during, the main event
- Training** Tips and guidance, plus 6-week lead-in and 16-week 100 mile training plans

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Gear - your bike

Choosing the right bike for you can seem like a mystifying experience, with so many options on the market. Road bikes haven't really changed in appearance over the years, but the materials and components used certainly have, and having the right bike could make the difference between loving and loathing cycling.

Cost

More is less when it comes to the cost of a new bike; the more a bike costs, the lighter it will be and the better the quality. A lighter bike is a faster one and, crucially, this will really help you to conserve energy when powering up hills and sprinting along flats.

When looking for a bike, pick them up and compare the various models for a good indication of how much weight can be saved.

Under £200

Bikes in this price bracket are fine for short distances but will likely be heavy and not suited to regular training for a long-distance event.

£200 - £500

These bikes will have better components and a lighter frame than the cheapest bikes, and unless you're planning on (or are already) cycling long distances ongoing, this is an average amount to spend. Shop around; you can get a perfectly good model for this price.

£500 upwards

You can spend thousands on a bike, but if you're going to be training seriously and / or racing then this is the bracket that you should be looking within. Bikes in this range will be lightweight and strong, with high-spec components.

Measurements and setup

Once you've made your purchase it's important to be measured up so that the bike fits you and your body style correctly. The default settings for a bike will most likely not be suitable and will mean that you suffer from neck ache, sore shoulders, stiff back and generally have a bad time in the saddle.

Professional bike retailers will be able to set your bike up for you, and you should ask if they don't offer. It's also worth writing down the settings once everything is where it needs to be so that you can re-adjust if you have to take your bike apart for any reason.

Top tip:

Whether you're buying a new or second-hand bike, or borrowing one, make sure that the bike you train on is the one that you ride on Race Day so that you're used to it.



Gear - clothing and extras

Got your bike sorted? Before you get pedalling, here are some vital bits of kit that you'll need to make sure that you're comfortable and, very importantly, safe.

Cycle helmet

This vital bit of equipment is absolutely essential and can literally be the difference between life and death in a worst-case scenario. Your helmet should be lightweight, adjustable, close-fitting without being too tight and made by a reputable manufacturer. The main strap under your chin and an adjustable dial at the back will help to ensure that the helmet feels comfortable and a peak at the front will help to keep the sun (or rain!) out of your eyes.

Cycling gloves

There are four things to consider when choosing your gloves: comfort, size, warmth and protection. Padding will help to prevent nerve damage in the palms of your hands.

Padded shorts

You're going to be spending a fair amount of time in the saddle, so a bit of extra cushioning will never go amiss! Padded cycling shorts are designed to fit your legs tightly so that they don't ride up or reduce your circulation.

Technical cycling jersey

Cycling jerseys are designed to keep you dry by wicking away moisture, meaning you stay cool in the warmer temperatures and warm in colder ones. The cut of the jersey is designed specifically for cycling, with a longer back and a handy pocket for stashing gels, puncture repair kits and other items. As a member of Meningitis Now's Team Tangerine, you'll receive your own named and branded jersey to wear during training and on the big day itself!

Sunglasses

Even if it's not sunny when you're out on the bike, the last thing you want is something flying into your eye at high speeds. Regular glasses or sunglasses are fine, but if you're out to invest then the best glasses have interchangeable lenses: clear, tinted and orange to improve light quality.

Water bottles

It's really important to take fluid with you on rides and, as most bikes have space for two bottle holders, consider one bottle for water and another for energy drinks so that you can alternate between them on the go.

Lights

If you're cycling at night then you are required by law to have lights at both the front and rear of your bike. Make sure you're visible to cars and buy the brightest lights that you can afford.

Essential accessories

There are a few accessories that you should take with you on the bike, both in training and for the main event: a puncture repair kit, tyre pump, small toolkit, small first aid kit, lip salve and sunscreen. It's also very useful to have a trip computer, whether attached to the bike or worn on your wrist, to help with distance and time covered.



Fuel

There are a lot of articles and theories around nutrition and hydration, but here are a few basics that will help to aid and enhance your cycling experience.

Stay hydrated

You should be drinking plenty of water - around 2 litres - throughout the day anyway, but adding exercise into your routine calls for a higher water intake.

It's also a good idea to replace lost salts during and after a ride; it's recommended to alternate water with isotonic sports drinks or dissolvable hydration tablets after around an hour of cycling.

Power up

Your body needs good quality fuel during the ride and there are all sorts of fuelling options, including good old jam sandwiches and Jelly Babies to specialised energy gels. As well as helping you to build up your distance and speed, training is the ideal time to try out a variety of fuelling methods and find what works for you so that you're prepared on the big day.

Refuel - but don't overeat

A common misconception is that you can eat whatever you like after you've been for a ride, but be mindful of your calorie consumption. If you find you're more hungry than usual after cycling, first make sure that you're well hydrated and then opt for healthy snacks like fruit, nuts, rice cakes with peanut butter and homemade flapjacks. Lots of lean protein is also great for helping your muscles to repair.

Keep it balanced

There's so much information out there about fancy diets and carb-cycling, but there's no need to overcomplicate things; as long as you're eating a balanced, healthy variety of food you will feel the benefits in your cycling. If you've got a long ride ahead of you then you may wish to eat more carbohydrates in the run-up; wholewheat pasta the night before a race is perfect as it tops up your muscles' energy stores and releases the energy steadily rather than all in one go and then causing your blood sugar to crash.



Training

Health checklist

Before you get stuck in with your training, it's a good idea to make sure there aren't any medical reasons why you shouldn't take on an exercise programme. Have a look at the checklist below and if you answer 'Yes' to some or all of the questions and you have any concerns, we advise you to make an appointment with your GP and request a check-up.

If you answer 'No' to all of these questions or have the all-clear from your GP, it's time to get going!

	YES	NO
Are you aged over 30 and / or haven't exercised for some time?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you suffer from any medical conditions?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you smoke, or have you recently given up?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you undergone any surgery in the past two years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you currently suffering from any injuries?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you currently take any prescribed medication?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you unsure about beginning an exercise programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

When to train

Everyone has a preferred time to exercise and ultimately, there is no right or wrong time as long as it works for you. It doesn't even have to be the same time each time; for example, you may choose to do your longer rides in the morning on a weekend so that it frees up the rest of your day, but all other rides in an evening. Just make sure that you're giving your body enough time to rest and recover between sessions.

Where to train

Generally speaking, nowhere is out of bounds, whether you stay indoors on a static bike or head outdoors. That said, you can't beat training like-for-like when it comes to the longer rides as you'll be encountering all sorts of gradients, weather conditions and road surfaces, so the majority of your training should be outside, preferably on the bike that you'll be using on Race Day.

Training

Structuring your sessions

To get the most out of your cycling, regardless of whether it's during training or on race day itself, you should follow correct exercise protocols to avoid injury.

1. Warm up

Spend a few minutes raising your heart rate, getting blood flowing to your muscles and preparing your body and mind to the exercise that you're about to undertake. Five minutes of very easy cycling is perfect.

2. Mobilise

Perform a few dynamic stretches; that is, lengthen your muscles and loosen your joints without holding a stretch. Think of this as though your muscles are a piece of Blu Tack; if you try to stretch them out too much when they're cold they will snap, whereas slowly warming and manipulating them first will make them much easier to work with.

3. Main session

This is the bulk of your training session; either a long, steady cycle or a shorter spin or efforts session.

4. Cool down

Bring your heart rate and body temperature back down steadily to flush waste by-products from your muscles and tissues to allow for a much faster recovery. Gently pedalling for around 10 minutes is ideal.

5. Flexibility

Now you can hold those stretches! Your muscles should be nicely relaxed following your ride and stretching properly will help you avoid cramp, muscle tears and stiffness. Spend 5 to 10 minutes in total.

Top tip:

Need some inspiration? Check out the videos on our Training Hub by Meningitis Now's resident runner and qualified personal trainer, Rachel, for some great mobilisation and flexibility exercises.



Training

Picking the right guide

Our training plans are designed to help you achieve your goal, whether you're a newcomer to 100 mile rides or seen your fair share and want to beat your best time.

If you're relatively new to cycling - or exercise in general - then take a look at the **lead-in training plan** on page 8 before getting stuck into the main 100 mile plan. This will get you used to cycling multiple times a week and gradually build up your time in the saddle before you start taking on rides of at least one hour.

Training notes

The 100 mile training plan is designed to help you build up your distance and endurance over a total of 16 weeks, with each 4 week block a little harder than the previous one. To get the most out of your training, there are a few different session types and disciplines to follow:

Tests

Held at the start of your training and then at the end of each 4-week block, tests are good for helping you see the progress that you're making. Your test ride should follow the same route each time, with as few traffic lights or right turns as possible to keep it relatively consistent. Ride at a comfortable pace and remember to record your exact time for each test so that you can track your progress.

Sweet spots

Sweet spot training is great for adding a bit of speed into your cycling, particularly when it comes to maintaining your pace on hills. For the days on the plan indicated as sweet spot ("SS") sessions, include 5 minutes of harder effort cycling for every 30 minutes within the ride. Efforts could be pedalling faster, riding one gear harder but keeping your cadence (pedalling rhythm) the same, or climbing a hill without changing gear.

Incorporating sweet spots at set times means that the terrain and gradient will vary so that you aren't just putting in the extra effort on 'easy' bits of road.

Rest days

Used correctly, rest days are just as important as training days as they give your muscles a chance to rebuild and recharge. To get the most out of your rest days, incorporate stretching and strengthening exercises and keep things moving with alternative disciplines such as swimming or walking.

Top tip:

Tick off each session of the plan after you complete it; it's a great, visual way of seeing how much you've achieved. You've got this!



Training plan - lead-in

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	10 minutes	10 minutes	15-20 minutes
WEDNESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
THURSDAY	10 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
SUNDAY	10-15 minutes	15-20 minutes	20-30 minutes

	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	20 minutes	20 minutes	20 minutes
WEDNESDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
THURSDAY	20 minutes	35 minutes	20 minutes
FRIDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
SATURDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest
SUNDAY	35 minutes	45 minutes	45 minutes

Top tip:

Incorporating a strengthening programme into your training on rest days will help to strengthen all of the muscles that you need for power, balance and endurance.

Training plan - 100 miles

Key: TS = Test Session SS = Sweet Spots

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	1 hour	1 hour	1.5 hours	1 hour
WEDNESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
THURSDAY	1 hour	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1 hour
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	1 hour TS	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1 hour TS
SUNDAY	2 hours	2 hours	2.5 hours	2 hours

	WEEK 5	WEEK 6	WEEK 7	WEEK 8
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	1.5 hours SS	1.5 hours SS	1.5 hours SS	1.5 hours
WEDNESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
THURSDAY	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1.5 hours	1.5 hours
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	2.5 hours SS	2.5 hours SS	2.5 hours SS	1 hour TS
SUNDAY	3 hours	3 hours	3.5 hours	3 hours

Top tip:

Incorporating a strengthening programme into your training on rest days will help to strengthen all of the muscles that you need for power, balance and endurance.

Training plan - 100 miles

	WEEK 9	WEEK 10	WEEK 11	WEEK 12
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	2 hours SS	2 hours SS	2 hours SS	2 hours
WEDNESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
THURSDAY	1.5 hours	2 hours	2 hours	1.5 hours
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	3 hours SS	3 hours SS	3 hours SS	1 hour TS
SUNDAY	3.5 hours	4 hours	4.5 hours	3 hours

	WEEK 13	WEEK 14	WEEK 15	WEEK 16
MONDAY	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
TUESDAY	2 hours SS	1.5 hours SS	2 hours SS	1 hour
WEDNESDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
THURSDAY	2 hours	1.5 hours	2 hours	1 hour
FRIDAY	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train	Rest / cross-train
SATURDAY	3.5 hours SS	3 hours SS	4 hours SS	1 hour
SUNDAY	4.5 hours	4.5 hours	5 hours	RACE DAY

Top tip:

As your rides get progressively longer, make sure you're staying hydrated and energised. Training sessions are the ideal time to find a nutrition strategy that works for you.

Race week

Taking part in official races can be daunting, not just because of the distance that you'll need to cover but also because there's lots to think about logistically. However, the vast majority of races follow the same format; here are some tips to help you know what to expect.

Preparing

Make sure you've read all of the pre-race instructions from the race organisers, which will tell you details like where you need to be and at what time, how to get to the start, where to park and details of local public transport.

The night before the race, spend a bit of time making sure your bike is fully functional and that you have any equipment you may need for emergency maintenance, laying out your cycling kit, attaching your race number to your top / helmet / bike and packing your post-race bag with a change of warm clothes so that everything is ready to hand in the morning. Some race organisers provide you with a specific bag for the bag drop, whereas others send you a tag to attach to your own bag; if you're provided with a bag, you must use this rather than your own. You might also want to bring an old item of warm clothing, or a bin liner, that you can throw away just before you cross the start line to keep you warm.

Use the information in your pre-race instructions to agree on a meeting point after the race for any supporters that are coming along with you.

Top tip:

Include a tasty treat in your post-race bag so you know you've got it to look forward to. A personal favourite of Meningitis Now's resident runner Rachel is a bag of salt and vinegar crisps!

Arriving

Give yourself plenty of time to get to the start; traffic can be heavy and queues for the toilets and bag drop can be long, with thousands of other cyclists all trying to get to the same place at the same time. If you're leaving a bag at the bag drop, make sure that your number tag is clearly visible and that you have everything you need; once you drop it off, you won't be able to access it until after the race.

Most races have an announcement system to keep everyone updated as the start time approaches, so listen or look out for this.

Lining up

You will likely have been given a starting wave, which will be reflected on your bib by a colour and / or letter. Follow the signage around the race village to your starting pen and listen to any instructions from race marshals and officials. Use your time in the starting pen to warm up, chat to fellow cyclists, soak up the atmosphere and mentally prepare yourself.



Race week

The start

You're off! Unless you're right at the front, it might take a little time for you to cross the start line, but if you're aiming for a time, don't worry - your timing chip will only activate once you cross the timing mats.

Try not to get swept up in the initial dash - you don't want to burn out. Even if you feel like everyone is overtaking you, try to stick to your own pace.

Main race

There will be mile markers all the way around the course so that you know how far you've gone, plenty of aid hubs and hydration stations and a great range of support, from casual spectators to official cheering points and quite often, live music.

For large events, the brand of energy gels that will be available at aid hubs will be pre-advertised. Unless you have trained with the same brand, it's best to stick with your own strategy.

The finish

The finish line will be clearly marked with a gantry, banner or archway and a timing clock. Your timing chip will give you your individual race time after the event. Keep moving forwards so that others can cross the line and you don't cramp up (being particularly careful when you walk after dismounting!).

Post-race

Collect your race goodies - event top, medal, water and goody bag - before picking up your bag from the collection area. Have a good stretch and celebrate your fantastic achievement!

Top tip:

Riding with a Meningitis Now charity place? Keep an eye out for details of our post-race reception in the run-up to the event - we'd love to see you there!

