

# Eating the Right Foods for Exercise

## Nutrition is important for fitness

Eating a well-balanced diet can help you get the calories and nutrients you need to fuel your daily activities, including regular exercise.

When it comes to eating foods to fuel your exercise performance, it's not as simple as choosing vegetables over doughnuts. You need to eat the right types of food at the right times of the day.

Learn about the importance of healthy breakfasts, workout snacks, and meal plans.

## Get off to a good start

Eating a healthy breakfast is especially important on days when exercise is on your agenda. Skipping breakfast can leave you feeling lightheaded or lethargic while you're working out. Choosing the right kind of breakfast is crucial. Too many people rely on simple carbohydrates to start their day. A plain white bagel or doughnut won't keep you feeling full for long. In comparison, a fibre- and protein-rich breakfast may fend off hunger pangs for longer and provide the energy you need to keep your exercise going.

Follow these tips for eating a healthy breakfast:

- Instead of eating sugar-laden cereals made from refined grains, try oatmeal, oat bran, or other whole-grain cereals that are high in fibre. Then, throw in some protein, such as milk, yogurt, or chopped nuts.
- If you're making pancakes or waffles, replace some of the all-purpose flour with whole-grain options. Then, stir some cottage cheese into the batter.
- If you prefer toast, choose whole-grain bread. Then pair it with an egg, peanut butter, or another protein source.

## Count on the right carbohydrates

Thanks to low-carb fad diets, carbohydrates have gotten a bad rap. But carbohydrates are your body's main source of energy. According to the Mayo Clinic, about 45 to 65 percent of your total daily calories should come from carbohydrates. This is especially true if you exercise. Consuming the right kind of carbohydrates is important. Many people rely on the simple carbs found in sweets and processed foods. Instead, you should focus on eating the complex carbs found in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans.

Whole grains have more staying power than refined grains because you digest them more slowly.

They can help you feel full for longer and fuel your body throughout the day. They can also help stabilize your blood sugar levels. Finally, these quality grains have the vitamins and minerals you need to keep your body running at its best.

## Pack protein into your snacks and meals

Protein is needed to help keep your body growing, maintained, and repaired. For example, the University of Rochester Medical Center reports that red blood cells die after about 120 days.

Protein is also essential for building and repairing muscles, helping you enjoy the benefits of your workout. It can be a source of energy when carbohydrates are in short supply, but it's not a major source of fuel during exercise.

Protein can come from:

- poultry, such as chicken and turkey
- red meat, such as beef and lamb
- fish, such as salmon and tuna
- dairy, such as milk and yogurt
- legumes, such as beans and lentils
- eggs

## Balance is key

As you settle into an active lifestyle, you'll probably discover which foods give you the most energy and which have negative effects. The key is learning to listen to your body and balancing what feels right with what's good for you.

Follow these tips:

- Aim to make breakfast a part of your routine.
- Choose complex carbohydrates, lean protein sources, healthy fats, and a wide variety of fruits and veggies.
- Stock your fridge and gym bag with healthy workout snacks.

The right balance of carbohydrates, protein, and other nutrients can help fuel your exercise routine.