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UTM EatWell

Sports Nutrition – Fueling Your Workouts

What to Eat Before Your Workout

If it's been more than 4 hours since you had a meal, and you plan to exercise for an hour or more, you will likely need a snack to fuel your workout.

The best pre-workout snack contains some carbohydrates and is something that you feel digests easily and “sits well” with you. Many people find a banana or a granola bar works well, but other options include a low-fat muffin, some milk or chocolate milk, cheese and crackers, cereal (dry or with milk) or any type of fruit.

Avoid high-fat foods and large meals just before working out, as these take a long time to empty from the stomach and may cause an upset stomach or nausea.

What to Eat During Your Workout

For workouts lasting less than one hour, drinking sips of water throughout is all you'll need.

However, if you are working out for more than an hour, especially in hot or humid conditions, you will need to replace electrolytes (sodium and potassium) and you may benefit from a small boost of carbohydrate to help you maintain your energy. Most people choose a “sports drink” (like Gatorade™ or Powerade™) or even a homemade version consisting of fruit juice and water mixed with a few grains of salt to provide a quick source of carbohydrates and electrolytes.

Women age 19 years and older need about 2.2 L (about 9 cups) of fluid per day, while men need about 3 L (13 cups) of fluid per day.

What to Eat After Your Workout

The most important thing to consume after your workout is enough fluid to replace what you lost as sweat. Keep your water bottle handy and keep sipping.

Tip: If you are well-hydrated your urine will be pale yellow, if looks dark and concentrated, you may be dehydrated.

If you exercise 3 - 4 times a week or less, you do not need to worry about a post-workout snack because you will have ample time to refuel your muscle glycogen stores before your next workout.

However, if you are someone who exercises intensively and/or often (for example a competitive athlete competing in multiple events during a tournament or a bodybuilder training two or more times a day), you will benefit from a post-workout snack within 30-60 minutes after your workout. This window of time provides the optimal opportunity to nourish muscles and replace glycogen (carbohydrate/energy) stores. If it's time for a meal after your workout, great! Just make sure to include a source of carbohydrate (whole-wheat bread, cereal, brown rice, quinoa, pasta, noodles, potatoes or yams) and a good source of protein (meat, poultry, fish, tofu, legumes, or eggs), along with some vegetables and fruit for a balanced meal. If it's not meal time, eat a snack containing carbohydrate and protein, within about an hour of your workout.

Some examples of good post-workout “carb + protein” snacks for athletes:

- Bread + “all natural” peanut butter or almond butter (+ a banana for larger appetites)
- An apple + almonds or walnuts (+ milk for larger appetites)
- Whole-grain crackers + cheese (+ vegetable cocktail for larger appetites)
- A small serving of leftover pasta salad with tuna and vegetables
- Cut-up fruit or berries + yogurt (+ granola or other crunchy cereal for larger appetites)
- Tortilla wrap or pita + tuna, or lean meat/poultry and leafy greens
- Cut-up vegetables + hummus (+ crackers for larger appetites)

Excess protein from food and/or supplements (protein powders and shakes) will be either used for extra energy (if calories are too low), excreted as waste, or potentially stored as body fat, so don't go overboard on the protein (see the UTM EatWell handout “Are Protein Powders Right for You?”).



Free for UTM students!

The UTM Health & Counselling Centre (DV 1123) has a **Registered Dietitian** who can assess your diet and help you make changes.

Call (905) 828-5255 to make a free 50 min. appointment.