

EATING TO BE A WORKOUT WEAPON

Ashleigh Feltham explains how to eat for optimal training.



We all want to maximise the results we achieve from our workouts, as well as feel our best during training. So what is the best combination of food groups to achieve this?

Before your workout

Prior to training it's important to include these two components:

1. Fuel your muscles with carbohydrates

These break down into glucose, which the muscle cells use, and provide you with the energy your body requires. Not all carbohydrates are created equal though, so opt for food and drink that is not too high in fibre. This will help the digestion process by minimising those feelings of bloatedness or needing to run to the bathroom. I recommend:

- A bananas; it's a quick and handy source of fuel. Other fruits like an apple or orange will also do the trick.
- Whole grain cereal.
- A crumpet or whole grain muffin with some jam or honey or peanut butter.
- Low fat yoghurt.
- Starchy vegetables like a potato or sweet potato. The non-starchy vegetables like broccoli or cucumber are not only very low in carbohydrates, but they can also leave you feeling gassy, which is not a great side effect before a workout!

In addition to choosing a meal that is not too high in fibre, lower fat options should be the goal as a meal higher in fat can lead to stomach upset.

Remember also to leave enough time for what you have eaten to be digested, before you exercise; exercising on a full stomach is never a good feeling so try leaving one to four hours before your workout or competition. Of course, if you know you cannot tolerate a food before exercise, don't eat it! By fuelling your body with the right food and drink prior to training, you'll be giving yourself the best chance at achieving optimum results.

If you are someone who gets ravenous mid-workout, try including a protein into your pre-workout meal. Peanut butter, nuts, low fat yoghurt, low fat milk or cheese are good options. These low GI carbohydrates will release energy slower, which will help you feel fuller for longer.

2. Drink sufficient fluids

Even slight dehydration can affect how well your body functions, and this applies whether you're exercising or not; however, you'll probably feel the difference even more if you exercise while dehydrated. Water should be your first choice when it comes to what to drink; but low or no fat milk, 100 per cent fruit juice, coffee, tea and sports drinks can also be secondary options.

You should try and drink moderate amounts so you don't need to run to the bathroom during your workout. When you do urinate, your goal is to NOT 'go for gold' – the colour of your urine indicates your hydration levels: very yellow or gold means you are not drinking enough. Clear-coloured liquid is what you should be aiming for as it suggests sufficient hydration.

After your workout

Post-training, there are three key elements to consider:

1. Protein

When it comes to protein you're never short of options. Choose from tuna, yoghurt, nuts, eggs, lean meats or milk. Contrary to common beliefs, more does not mean better! You actually only need around 15g to 25g after a workout because anything more will be excreted via your urine, or stored as fat.

2. Carbohydrates

As already mentioned, choosing carbs that have a steady release, (i.e. potentially more fibre) will help you feel fuller for longer, which is important after training when the urge to raid the pantry often arises! Options include:

- whole grain bread or wraps with ricotta cheese and salad
- Weet-a-bix with low or no fat milk
- brown rice or pasta with tuna and non-starchy vegetables like spinach capsicum and tomato
- smoothie
- yoghurt with granola.

3. Hydrate

If you sweat a lot or exercise intensely for more than an hour, you may need to replace your electrolytes. Aim to replace more the fluid you lost by 125 to 150 per cent, ideally within the immediate four to six hours after your workout. If you have access to digital scales, this can be



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achieved by weighing yourself before and after your workout to determine how much fluid you have lost.

If you plan to exercise again on that same day, then you'll need to eat to recover and to fuel that next training session; this requires some savvy time management. If you are exercising once only, then the timing of your post-workout meal can be more relaxed.

Now that you have some knowledge of how to eat for success, both before and after your workout, go forth, train and enjoy your results.

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