



## What to Eat Before and After a Workout

You wake up in the morning with just enough time to squeeze in a jog on the treadmill before getting ready for work. You don't even have a spare minute to grab a bite to eat on your way out the door. You're trying to lose weight and you want to make the most out of the calories you've just burned. Why "waste" the workout by having breakfast?

The fact is that not eating well can actually make your workouts less effective. Skipping meals can make you feel faint while exercising. Plus, you will be more likely to overeat later. Eating too much before a workout isn't a good idea, either. Your body can't digest a heavy meal while you're exercising intensely. So, what and how much should you eat, and when?

### Find a healthy balance

A well-rounded diet is crucial for staying healthy in general. But it's even more important when you exercise regularly. Extreme diets that limit certain food groups or fat intake won't give your body the fuel it needs to run well. You need carbohydrates for energy, protein for building muscle, plus a little fat for staying power.

### Time it right

You don't want to run on fumes when you exercise. That's why it's important to have a light snack about an hour before you work out. Keep some healthy, convenient foods on hand so you can grab something even if you're short on time.

Try to have a serving of carbohydrates, such as whole-wheat pasta, brown rice, fruit or veggies at every pre-workout meal or snack. Also include a small amount of lean protein. For instance, pair a piece of string cheese with a few whole-wheat crackers. Note that foods high in fat don't digest easily and can cause stomach upset during exercise.

### Be wary of meal replacement bars

Many aren't much better for you than a candy bar. Look for bars that are low in fat and sugar, and have four or five grams of protein and twenty-five grams of carbohydrates.

### Stay hydrated

Drink at least one, eight-ounce glass of water before and after your workout, unless your doctor has restricted your fluid intake. Take a few more sips every fifteen minutes or so while you exercise.



### Replenish yourself afterwards

During a workout you use muscle glycogen stores for energy. Those stores must be replaced for optimal recovery, as well as for muscle growth and repair. Eating some carbs and protein are the best way to do that. Eat within one to two hours of a workout to help your body recharge.