

Eating for Energy

Healthy eating is the cornerstone to success at work, home, and in the gym. Your body needs energy to keep going, just as your car needs fuel to drive. The food you eat gives you that energy — the physical and mental stamina you need to make it through your day.

Energy comes from 3 nutrients: carbohydrate, fat, and protein. Carbohydrate and protein yield 4 calories/gram and fat 9 calories/gram. After you eat, these nutrients are released into your bloodstream and converted to glucose, or blood sugar — the energy you need to power your body's work. Energy you don't use right away is stored as glycogen in your liver for quick release or as fat for possible use later.

Colorful carbs

Fruits and vegetables contain complex carbohydrates — your body's preferred source of fuel. If you don't eat enough carbohydrates, your muscles will feel chronically fatigued.

You need 60%-70% of your calories as carbohydrates — which fits perfectly with a plan to eat 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

Morning energy boost

After 8-12 hours without food, your body needs to replenish blood sugar levels.

Your brain needs a fresh supply of glucose, its main energy source. Sustained mental work requires a large turnover of glucose in the brain. It's been shown that breakfast eaters are less tired and better able to concentrate and solve problems than those who skip breakfast. Perfect produce to round out your breakfast includes berries, peaches, bananas, and vegetable or fruit juices.

Energy equation

When you exercise, it takes 20 hours to fully restore depleted muscles. You'll need carbohydrate-rich foods and drinks within the first 2 hours after exercise — the sooner the better — to help prevent fatigue and burnout. Fruits and juices are great recovery foods.

If you exercise for prolonged periods you probably know that what you eat before you exercise can affect your performance. But did you know the *type* of carbohydrate can make a

difference? Moderate and low glycemic index carbohydrates enter the bloodstream slowly and are best eaten before exercise to keep you going longer. High glycemic index carbohydrates enter the bloodstream quickly, and are best eaten during or after exercise.

Electrolyzing

When you sweat you lose potassium, sodium, and calcium — electrolytes that help you maintain normal water balance in your body. Everyone except elite athletes tends to get enough sodium from daily food intake, but you probably need to replace the potassium you lose. The best way to do that is with fruits and vegetables — baked potatoes, bananas, orange juice, pineapple juice, and raisins are all good sources of potassium. Dairy products are the best means to replace the calcium, but turnip greens, dried figs, mustard greens, and okra also supply small amounts.

Glycemic Index for Fruits and Vegetables

Low

Apple
Pear
Dried apricots
Green beans
Underripe banana
Grapefruit

Moderate

Orange juice
Boiled potato
Corn
Sweet potato
Overripe banana
Green peas
Orange
Apple juice

High

Baked potato
Raisins