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NUTRITION TIPS FOR ACTIVE BODIES

A Word on Morning Workouts

For some, waking up with a meal might be a lot to ask for, but after an eight-hour fast (break-fast), it's important to fuel the body with energy. In *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, Nancy Clark recommends having at least 100 calories (the equivalent to about one apple or banana) before engaging in a morning activity. Though the time that breakfast is eaten usually varies from athlete to athlete, studies have shown that a small pre-exercise meal in the morning can have a tremendous effect on one's workout. While some athletes have been known to wake up two hours before an activity and return to sleep to allow their bodies to digest, others grab a few bites of fruit or a bagel and step out the door. Play around, and see what sits well with your stomach.

Pre-Exercise Tips

1. **Drink water!**

2. **<60 minute workout: High-carbohydrate, low-fat snack.**
   Unlike fats and foods high in fiber, which take the stomach a bit of time to digest, most carbohydrates are relatively easy to break down depending on their rate of digestion. As a result, the body is able to use up the discombobulated carbohydrates and allocate them to working muscles quickly.

3. **>60 minute workout: Eat a heavy carbohydrate meal the night before, with a little fat and protein for sustained energy (e.g. eggs on toast, bagel and peanut butter).**
   This option is especially good if you don't like to eat before a workout. The eight-hour slumber will be just right for your body to break down the carbohydrates, fats, and proteins, and use them the next morning. Also, fats are the body's energy reserve, as they tend to produce greater amounts of energy within a small size.

4. **Allow time for adequate digestion (3–4 hours for a large meal; 2–3 hours for a smaller meal; less than 1 hour for a small snack)**.
   Once the body begins to exercise it will allocate blood flow to the muscles rather than the stomach and as a result will slow the rate of digestion causing one to be uncomfortable or to vomiting.

5. **Don't waste calories on anticipation.**
   If you plan on traveling or realize you're in for a wait, make sure to keep a snack nearby. Dried fruit, granola, crackers, and so on. If you plan on eating a sweet snack, be cautious as it causes some athletes to rebound hypoglycemia and experience fatigue or lightheadedness.

Mid-Workout Pep Talk

Chances are you've been perspiring, crying, and maybe even drooling (that is if you have enough fluids left), and so it's important to (1) replace lost water, (2) replace lost electrolytes, and (3) replace used carbohydrates.

1. **Drink water!**
   Forcing your body into a state of dehydration can put it under a lot of stress. It increases your body's temperature, which in turn increases your metabolism, which in turn again, causes you to burn that much coveted carbohydrate. Also, you may experience a lack of concentration, cramps and/or your workout may become increasingly difficult. So, please, just do it!

2. **Replace electrolytes.**
   Simply put, electrolytes are regulators for water balance within the body, and they allow our muscles to move. As we sweat, electrolytes come out with the water and we lose them forever, or at least until we get them from drinks and foods. Try a sports drink from the store or make your own with some sugar, salt, and fruit juice.

3. **Get some carbohydrates into your worn out muscles.**
   The quickest way to get your energy fix is with a sports drink and or sports jell. This way, you not only get water, electrolytes, and carbohydrates for energy, but you also bypass a lot of time in digestion because a liquid is much easier than a solid to break down in the stomach. Also, if you want, add in a bite of some fruit and/or a peanut butter sandwich (the mixture of protein and carbohydrates will help in recovery and growth).

Post-Workout Wrap-Up

Just because your body is cooling down, doesn't mean your diet should too. The post-work out isn't much different than the mid-workout plan, except that there are two steps. The first step (recovery snack) should contain easily digested carbohydrates (smoothie, graham crackers, sports drink), while the second step (recovery meal) should allow for longer digestion (pasta, rice, stir fry).

1. **Within 15 minutes of workout, consume water, electrolytes, carbohydrates, and a little protein.**

   During exercise your body breaks down muscle with plans of building newer and better adapted muscles. Fifteen minutes after a workout, the body continues to break down muscle, and in order to stop this, all one has to do is consume the four things noted above (water, electrolytes, carbohydrates, protein). Adding carbohydrates with protein helps to stop muscle breakdown, refuel depleted energy stores, and build muscle. In other words, it promotes recovery to its fullest. Try and stay away from high-fat, high-fiber foods, as these tend to be harder for the body to break down. Save these items for your real meal following the workout.

2. **Within two hours after workout, eat a normal meal.**
   Eat to your heart's content. Your body will most likely crave carbohydrate-rich foods, so do just that. Just be sure to keep a well-rounded diet, and keep in mind how much energy you may need later that day or the next.

For the Road

1. **Plan ahead**:

   If you have time, pack yourself some snacks for the ride there and back, as well as a meal and drink. Anticipation can be quiet taxing on the body and it's important to replace any lost energy.

2. **Snack ideas**:

   Fruits, vegetables, trail mix, bagel, cereal, sports bar, fruit juice, and/or yogurt.

3. **If you must eat out**:

   Sometimes it just can't be helped, and we all give into fast food. If you find yourself in such a situation, don't let what you already know about food go to waste. Choose foods rich in carbohydrates and vegetables such a sandwich and chili side, fish or veggie burrito, or turkey sandwich with low-fat vegetable soup.

The information provided above was developed using *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook,* 4th edition; *Understanding Nutrition,* 11th edition by Ellie Whitney and Sharon Rady Rolfes; and scandpg.org, the website of the Sports, Cardiovascular, and Wellness Nutrition, a dietetic practicing group of the American Dietetic Association. It was written by Andrew Zarate, Dietetic Intern.