

Exercise: Morning, Noon, or Night?

When to work out

The best time for you to work out depends on your specific exercise goal: general fitness, weight loss, conditioning for competition, or recreation. It's also important to recognize that your fitness schedule will be dictated to some degree by professional and family responsibilities as well as conditions that will fluctuate throughout the day, such as your environment, hormone levels, and sleep patterns.

Morning Exercise

If you are the type of person who can wake up to eat a couple of hours before your work out, try the following tips.

- Consume high-carbohydrate foods that are low in fat and have a moderate amount of protein.
- Eat 400 – 800 calories in your pre-workout meal
- Drink at least 10 ounces of water or sports drink

Do some experimenting to see what you can stomach for different types of exercise. If you find that you can't stomach anything at all, just be sure to eat plenty for dinner the night before and for breakfast when you return home. Here are some small, easy-to-digest meals to try right before your workout.

- A meal replacement drink, put one by your bedside and guzzle it after the alarm clock sounds
- A sports drink
- A packet of energy gel
- A yogurt

Many morning exercisers complain of ravenous hunger by midmorning and blame it on the exercise. If your post workout breakfast never satisfies you and you end up getting hungry later in the morning, you're not eating the right foods. A morning meal should supply at least one-quarter of your daily needs for calories, protein, fiber, essential fats, vitamins, and minerals. A smart post-workout breakfast supplies ample amounts of calories, protein, and fat. The protein and fat will slow digestion and keep you feeling full longer. As a result, you feel satisfied and ready to face your day.

Midday Exercise

Eating before your midday workout - Many people who work out during their lunch breaks complain that sometimes hunger gets the better of them. That's because their breakfasts have been digested and processed and their blood sugar levels are starting to dip. Since the brain needs a steady supply of sugar, feelings of fatigue take over. It is a good idea to bring a pre-workout snack to munch on at work and following these tips.

- Avoid discomfort by eating 1 to 3 hours before your workout. This will allow sufficient time for your stomach to clear
- Eat 100 to 400 calories, depending on your body size and what you had for breakfast. If you ate a light breakfast, you may want a bit more for your midmorning snack.
- Consume high-carbohydrate, low-fat foods that can be easily digested.

Eating after your midday workout - The problem with exercising during your lunch hour is that you may not have time to eat lunch, which is an important meal. To save time, pack your own lunch. Pack convenient foods, yogurts, carrots, cereal bars, fruit, even leftovers! Remember to keep hydrated and stretch throughout the day.

Evening Exercise

Eating before your evening workout - To make sure you have enough fuel for your workout and enough calories left after exercise to prevent overeating:

- Never skip breakfast. Your goal is take in at least 500 calories in the morning
- Make lunch your main meal of the day. Consume high-quality protein, along with fresh fruit and vegetables
- Have a mid-afternoon snack along with some water to ready yourself for your workout.

Eating after your evening workout - Always eat after your workout, no matter how late it is. Your body needs nutrients such as carbohydrates and protein to recover. Many people worry about eating too close to bedtime because they fear that the calories will go straight to their fat cells while they sleep, but this isn't true. After exercise, your muscles need to restore glycogen, so they will absorb calories even while you're asleep, storing them to be burned during your next workout. Those calories will only turn to fat only if you overeat, which you can avoid with the help of the following tips.

- As soon as you walk in the door after your workout, guzzle some fluid. As you prepare your food, keep drinking. This will replace sweat losses and help you fill up.
- Keep your evening meal light. The key is to have foods on hand that you can easily prepare in small portions. This way you can avoid eating anything in sight. You'll sleep better too.

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