



EATING FOR PREPARATION AND RECOVERY

What to Eat Before and After Your Workout

Regardless of whether a client's goals are focused on weight-loss, muscle-gain, or chronic illness avoidance, the importance of nutrition cannot be stressed enough. When planning any client's diet or meal schedule, I always ask three important questions:

1. **What is the goal?**
2. **When is the consumption of the most calories throughout the day?**
3. **At which point in the day are workouts typically scheduled?**

These questions give me a frame of reference that aids me in the development of a detailed nutrition recommendation that is specifically designed to prepare the body for a workout, repair from the workout, and allot calories throughout the day when the body is most in need of essential vitamins, minerals, and macronutrients. Regardless of whether a client's goals are focused on weight loss, muscle gain, or chronic illness avoidance, the importance of nutrition cannot be stressed enough.

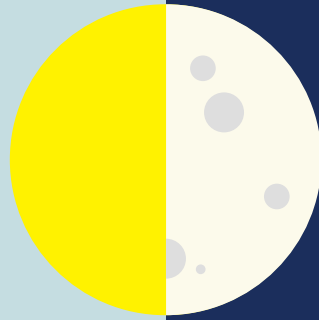
While a protein shake, kale-packed smoothie, or clean carbohydrate-rich meal might seem perfect at any time, few realize the importance of the time they consume their meals (and the macronutrient and micronutrient formulations of their foods) in relation to when they exercise.

This consideration however, is essential to maximizing the benefits of nutrition. As with many things in life, meal planning for success is accurately described with the common adage: "Timing is everything."

During the initial interview with a new client, I always ask what time of day they typically prefer to work out. By considering BMI, gender, age, and goals, a client and I can determine the expected number of calories to be consumed daily. I then design a meal plan to provide carbohydrate-rich foods that fuel the body's energy requirements for exercise prior to workouts, and protein-packed meals and snacks to supply the body with the necessary nutrients to aid in reparation of muscle fibers and support metabolic processes following workouts.

So, here's the rundown of what to eat before and after workouts depending upon three main factors: gender, goals, and time of day that workouts are performed:

***Keep in mind that individuals who have goals focused on weight-loss or fat-loss will adhere to a diet reduced in calories to allow for caloric deficit, while individuals with goals related to muscle gain or muscle-maintenance will adhere to diets focused on increased caloric levels. The meals consumed pre- and post-workout, while similar when dependent on time of day, should reflect these goals and caloric intake requirements respectively.*



***Males working out in the morning:**

Any workout that is performed within the first 4 hours upon waking should be fueled with a combination of carbohydrates and proteins, but with an emphasis on consuming clean carbohydrates, lean proteins, and a natural form of fruit or fruit juices that provide antioxidant benefits. Oatmeal with berries, smoothies containing Greek yogurt and an assortment of fruits, or granola with a variety of fruits and nuts can all provide the body with adequate fuel that energizes the body for a workout while providing necessary protein for the repair processes that follow.

***Females working out in the morning:**

Regardless of the fitness or healthgoals of the female client who chooses to train in the morning, the pre-workout meal should be one comprised of clean carbohydrate sources that not only fuel the workout, but prepare the body with adequate carbohydrate supplies for the remainder of the day. Smoothies that contain combinations of protein-rich yogurts and carbohydrate-rich fruits and greens, breakfast burritos that contain eggs and vegetables such as asparagus or peppers, and even on-the-go snacks such as granola-packed parfaits all provide the body with ample amounts of carbohydrates with satisfying protein. These meals can be used interchangeably pre- and post-workout when consumed in the morning due to the anticipated calorie burn that follows the workout for hours throughout the day.

***Males working out in the evening:**

Because evening workouts are followed by the body's natural sleep period, the meal that prepares the body for the workout should be similar to that of the meal precipitating the morning workout (naturally carbohydrate-rich with whole grains, fruits, and vegetables). A major difference however is that high-protein foods such as lean meats and dairy products should be the focus of post-workout meals consumed in the evening. With higher calorie meals consumed late in the evening, the chance of interrupted sleep due to digestive issues can occur, so these post-workout meals should contain stomach-soothing ingredients (void of fatty, fried, or sugary foods) and be packed with reparative nutrients such as proteins and clean fats (think nuts, seeds, and healthy oils) instead.

***Females working out in the evening:**

While morning workouts can utilize the nutrients consumed from carbohydrate-rich meals pre- and post-workout interchangeably, the female client who opts for evening workouts benefits from the same pre-workout meal guidelines but should opt for a less carbohydrate-loaded post-workout meal. Because the body's sleep cycle can be easily interrupted by overconsumption of carbohydrates and the excess of calories can be stored as fat when unused (as when sleeping), the protein-rich varieties such as grilled or baked lean meats with light carbohydrate sources such as salads or steamed vegetables may prove to support the body's metabolic and energy requirements without contributing to undesirable weight gain.



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