

# What to Eat for Exercise

## BEFORE EXERCISE

**Goal** – Provide easily digestible energy to fuel your workout

**Timing** – 30 to 60 minutes before exercise

### Food:

**Carbohydrate (20 to 30 g)** – Used as your body's primary source of energy (*granola bar, oatmeal, fruit, applesauce, toast, pretzels*)

**Protein** – Small amounts, if any, to avoid digestion issues

**Fat** – Should be avoided

**Hydration** – Drink 8 to 16 fluid ounces of water

## DURING EXERCISE

**Goal** – Maintain energy levels, especially for activities lasting over 60 minutes

**Timing** – While exercising

- Shorter workouts (*under 45 minutes*) typically do not require extra nutrition
- Longer workouts (*45 to 60 minutes*) or intense training

### Food:

**Carbohydrate (up to 30 g per hour)** – Provide instant energy to active muscles (*sports drink, energy chew*)

**Protein** – Should be avoided

**Fat** – Should be avoided

**Electrolytes** – Help replenish minerals lost in sweat (*LMNT, Liquid IV, Gatorlyte*)

**Hydration** – Sip 4 to 8 fluid ounces of water every 15 to 20 minutes

## AFTER EXERCISE

**Goal** – Replenish energy stores, repair muscles, promote recovery

**Timing** – Prioritize having a complete meal following exercise

### Food:

**Carbohydrate** – Needed to restore depleted glycogen stores (*fruits, potatoes, whole grains*)

**Protein** – Supports muscle recovery (*eggs, lean meats, dairy products, plant-based proteins, protein shake*)

**Fat** – Helps with long-term recovery as part of an overall balanced diet (*avocado, nuts, olive oil, salmon*)

**Hydration** – Drink 16 to 24 fluid ounces of water

## GENERAL

- Aim for at least 75 fluid ounces of water per day. Increase water intake to adjust for sweat rate and hot conditions. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water.
- Combine carbohydrates, protein, and fat throughout the day for balanced meals and sustained energy.
- Consult with a registered dietitian for specific nutrient requirements.

### Sources:

*Nutrition and Athletic Performance* – Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise 48(3):p 543-568, March 2016.

*Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025* – U.S. Department of Agriculture & U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020. [dietaryguidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)