

Fuel up your body before, during and after exercising

If you are enjoying regular physical activity, it is important to give your body the right fuel.

To see how much you know about fueling up, take the True or False test.

1. Active individuals need to eat more than inaction people.
2. If you are involved in regular physical activity you should take vitamin supplements.
3. By drinking water when you feel thirsty, you can avoid becoming dehydrated.
4. Sports drinks are just for competitive athletes.
5. Salt tablets are necessary to replace sodium lost in sweat.
6. Eating a chocolate bar right before exercising will give you a good energy boost.
7. What you eat in the previous days has more effect on your body's energy stores than a pre-workout meal.

1. **True.** To meet the demands of an active lifestyle, you should consume more calories. The majority of those calories (60-70 per cent) should come from carbohydrate, with a focus on complex carbohydrates or starches.

Carbohydrate is the body's preferred source of energy. Because our bodies can not store large amounts of carbohydrate, we need to assure that our daily intake is adequate. Good sources of complex carbohydrate include breads, pasta, rice, potatoes and cereals.

We store some carbohydrate in the form of glycogen in our liver and muscles. Glycogen is readily used up during endurance types of exercise, such as long bicycle rides.

If it's not replaced, you may feel extra fatigue after exercising. The sooner you consume carbohydrates after strenuous exercise (ideally within 15 to 30 minutes), the faster your muscle glycogen stores are replaced.

2. **False.** Many active individuals may need more iron. Prolonged exercise may cause your body to eliminate more iron.

A sign of iron depletion is fatigue upon exertion. Eating lean cuts of beef, lamb, pork and/or the dark meat of chicken or turkey will boost your iron intake.

Activity often leads to an increased loss of zinc through sweat and urine. This material is needed for energy metabolism and many people do not consume enough.

Foods high in zinc include meat, eggs, seafood and whole wheat breads.

If you are consuming a balanced diet, you likely don't need to worry about vitamin supplements.

3. **FALSE.** Your body may need water before you feel thirsty. Lack of fluid can lead to dehydration, which impairs temperature control

in your body as well as cramps, nausea, a decrease in coordination and, in a worst case scenario, heat stroke.

Because thirst isn't always a good indicator of how much fluid is needed, there are some guidelines.

For strenuous exercise, drink two to three glasses of water two hours before exercising and another glass within a half hour before.

During exercise, try to take in half to three quarters of a cup of water every 15 to 20 minutes. Drink plenty of water afterward.

4. **FALSE.** If you're taking part in an activity that lasts more than an hour (running, cross-country

skiing, or cycling), sports drinks can be helpful.

5. **FALSE.** It is only under extreme circumstances, such as marathon-type events in very hot climates, that there is a need to take special steps to replace electrolytes (e.g. sodium and potassium). For regular physical activity, your normal diet and fluid intake will replace any electrolytes you lose.

6. **FALSE.** Eating a chocolate bar or other high-sugar foods before exercise will give you a temporary energy boost, but that can be followed

by a sluggish feeling when the sugar high wears off.

It's ideal to eat three to four hours before exercising, as most food will be digested in that time.

7. **FALSE.** What you've eaten in the days before exercising has more effect on your body's energy stores than the pre-workout meal.

There is no magic formula for a pre-workout meal, however, foods high in complex carbohydrates and low in fat and protein are easier to digest and help maintain your blood sugar.

Smart food choices

include a whole wheat bagel with lettuce, tomato and a small amount of low fat cheese, or a pasta and vegetable salad.

If your activity takes place first thing in the morning, try having some

thing easily absorbable, such as a glass of orange juice.

It will give you some energy but shouldn't interfere with your workout.

This article was written by Deb Jones.

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