

FOOD & DRINK

Helping you achieve your New Year's Resolutions

Proper nutrition is key to reaching fitness goals

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At the beginning of the new year, many Canadians resolve to get fit and cut back on food—a combination that can put their fitness plans at risk.

Get your new year off to the right start—eat right to be at your active best. Whether it's a walk around the block or an intense workout, fitness is achievable and fun with the right food choices.

According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, 63 per cent of Canadians are not active enough.

Furthermore, lack of energy is one of the top three factors preventing Canadian couch potatoes from becoming more active. This year, make your New Year's fitness resolution a reality by taking advantage of food energy.

The following tips provide basic information to fuel your active lifestyle.

FOOD IS FUEL

Include a wide variety of food in your diet as outlined in *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. Whole foods are the best way to nourish our bodies with energy and essential nutrients. While nutrient overdoses cannot improve performance, shortages may impair it.

CONCENTRATE ON CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates from food are our main fuel for activity. Muscles store carbohydrate fuel in the form of glycogen. To ensure that energy needs are met, have more than the minimum number of servings from each food group.

The recommended daily serving ranges are:

- Grain products—five to 12 servings.
- Vegetables and fruit—five to 10 servings.
- Milk products—two to four servings.
- Meat and meat alternatives—two to three servings.

Keep in mind that although the lower number of recommended servings are a minimum, the upper number of servings is not meant to be a maximum.

Very active individuals can easily con-

sume more than 12 grain products or four servings of milk products per day to meet their energy needs.

If the number of servings seem high to you, remember individual serving sizes as outlined in *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* are smaller than we think.

PLAN MEALS AND SNACKS FOR MAXIMUM ENERGY

Allow enough time for your food to digest: three to four hours for a large meal and less than two hours for a snack.

Meals or snacks that contain plenty of carbohydrates (grains, fruits, vegetables and milk products) should be eaten shortly after you exercise to refuel your muscle stores of glycogen or carbohydrate energy.

CHOOSE LOWER FAT FOODS MORE OFTEN

Most of our food choices should be lower in fat. Other foods, such as spreads, sauces, gravy, dressings and salty commercial snack foods, account for almost half of our dietary fat intake and are an easy area to cut down.

Choosing lower fat foods leaves more room for carbohydrate-rich choices for active people.

NO NEED FOR SUPPLEMENTS

There is no evidence to date that proves that supplements increase strength and endurance, endurance performance or provide energy.

Under certain health circumstances, supplements may be appropriate upon the advice of a physician or registered dietitian.

Most healthy, active people can meet all their nutrient needs with healthy food choices. (Folic acid and vitamin E are the exception. Both vitamins need to be taken in a supplement form.)

WATCH YOUR IRON

Iron in blood delivers oxygen to working muscles. Active people should be sure to get enough iron in their diet.

Red meat contains large amounts of iron

that is easily absorbed by the body. The iron from plant sources is not as easily absorbed.

However, the absorption of iron from plant foods improves when accompanied by some vitamin C in the meal. (For example an orange with breakfast cereal.)

BONE UP ON CALCIUM

Calcium is essential for strong bones, particularly for women who are at greater risk of osteoporosis later in life. Bone building nutrients like calcium and vitamin D, along with regular physical activity, help keep bones thick and strong. For most Canadians, milk and milk products are an ideal source of calcium.

DON'T FORGET THE FLUIDS

With all this talk about food, don't forget the fluids.

Drink plenty of water, milk, juice and other decaffeinated fluids everyday, especially before and after physical activity.

Frequent small servings of plain cool water or other beverages are recommended during exercise.

For most people who are active for one hour or less in moderate temperatures, water is the best beverage. Sports drinks are not essential because, in most cases, ordinary food and beverages provide enough

sodium, potassium, chloride and magnesium to replace sweat loss.

After activity, drink 500ml (two cups) of milk, water, juice or other decaffeinated beverages for every pound of weight lost to replace body fluids.

GET EXPERT ADVICE FROM A DIETITIAN

A registered dietitian is your most reliable source of nutrition information. For a listing of dietitian with expertise in sports nutrition, contact Dietitian of Canada at (416) 596-0857.

Finally, whether you are attempting to be more active or simply eat better, goal setting can help. Small, progressive steps forward can help you arrive at the outcome you are looking for. Set goals that are SMART—specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-tagged.

People can also order *Making the Most of You*, an easy-to-follow, personalized guide to sensible eating and physical activity. The kit, which costs \$5.95, contains a motivational guide, food and activity tracking chart, menu suggestions and a recipe booklet.

To order a copy of *Making the Most of You*, contact a dietitian at Dairy Farmers of Ontario at (905) 821-8970.

Active Facts

- ✓ 63 per cent of Canadians are inactive, increasing their risk of heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, adult-onset diabetes, osteoporosis and other serious illnesses.
- ✓ 42 per cent of Canadians rate physical activity as very important to them personally.
- ✓ 59 per cent of inactive Canadians state that they don't have the energy to become more active.
- ✓ The top three barriers to physical activity for adult Canadians are: lack of time, energy and motivation.
- ✓ 33 per cent of Canadians aged 25 to 55 are active.
- ✓ 29 per cent participate in some physical activity on four or more days a week, but do not meet the definition of active because of insufficient activity, duration or intensity.
- ✓ Active Canadians are more likely to report feeling happy and hopeful about the future very often.

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