

[IMAGE]

Fuel Your Body the Right Way

By Editorial Staff

There's a well-known saying: "Use the right tool for the right job." When it comes to performance, if you want the best out of your body, you need to give it the right foods. In other words, if you want to be able to swim 20 laps a day, cookies and candy bars are the wrong "tool" to accomplish that particular "job."

But the question remains: What are the best possible tools? Eatingwell.com has a few tips for the best foods to get the best possible performance out of your body:

Carbs can go the distance. So, you've decided to start training for a marathon - great! But how do you stop yourself from hitting that "wall" halfway through, where your arms feel like lead weights and your feet feel like they are stuck in clay? The trick for any long-distance, endurance sport such as running is loading up on carbohydrates - provided they are the right kind and the right amount.

Good choices include raisins or bananas (extra potassium) and pretzels (extra sodium). Both potassium and sodium are lost from the body via perspiration as you work out. However, make sure not to overdo your carbs. No more than about 60 grams (240 calories) per hour, or those excess carbs will stay in the digestive system rather than going to the muscles, and cause cramping.

Protein building blocks. What you eat after a workout can be just as important as what you eat beforehand. Protein helps repair muscle, and even build up new muscle. Something as simple as a tuna sandwich or a protein bar will go a long way toward keeping you in peak shape. Experts recommend several small protein meals for maximum effect.

Just as with the carbs, be sensible about it, however. Don't order that Hungry Man 48-ounce steak. Instead, choose a smaller cut and balance it out with some healthy carbs and vegetables. Remember: excess protein gets stored as fat!

Healthy fats fight inflammation. It may seem counterproductive to recommend *adding* fats to the diet for peak sports performance, but as with the carbs and the protein, it's a matter of choosing the right ones. The whole point to a high-intensity workout is to burn fat, but you still need a certain amount to give you energy.

Fatty fish such as salmon provides omega-3s, and substituting ground turkey for beef gives you the lean fat your body needs. Olive oil, nuts and avocados are other good energy-boosting fats to keep you going strong.

image - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark High-calorie fats such as red meat or heavy cream will exacerbate inflammation within the body and make you feel weighed down. Switching to lower-calorie fats will not only fight inflammation within joints and muscles, but also give you that extra energy boost you need to sustain your workout.

Overall, the key to making the right food choices is to know which ones will be of the most help, whether you want to be first across the finish line at next year's marathon or make it up "Heart Attack Hill" on your bike. Give your body the right tools, and it will help you get the job done!

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