

The right way to fuel up before workouts

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(HealthDay)—Mom was right when she said no swimming for an hour after lunch. Even though it takes energy to work out, it's important that exercise doesn't interfere with digestion.

Like Goldilocks, you need just the right amount of food. Eat too much and you might feel sluggish rather than energized. Eat too little, and you

may not have the stamina to work out effectively.

Experts suggest that your pre-[workout](#) fueling be personalized to your needs, such as how long your workout will be and whether you're restricting calories to lose weight.

Timing is also very important. If you've eaten a full meal, you should wait 3 to 4 hours before exercising. Remember that a [healthy meal](#) includes carbs such as [whole grains](#) or legumes, non-starchy vegetables, [fruit](#), lean protein like chicken, tofu or fish, and some healthy fat. If you're trying to lose weight, fill half your plate with vegetables and fruit and a quarter each with lean protein and whole grains or legumes rather than white potatoes or pasta.

Fueling Timetable:

- If eating a large meal: Eat at least 3 to 4 hours before exercise.
- If eating a small meal: Eat 2 to 3 hours before exercise.
- If eating a snack: Eat 1 hour before exercise.

Of course, it's not always possible to perfectly time meals to exercise, especially if you train first thing in the morning. If you need to eat closer to a workout, scale down the calories. For instance, cut full-meal portions in half if you're eating two or three hours before exercise.

On the other hand, if it's been more than 4 hours since your last meal, having a small but healthy snack before your workout can help prevent hunger pangs.

Smart Snacking:

- Banana or other [fresh fruit](#).
- Yogurt.

- Small fruit smoothies.
- Whole-grain bagel half or crackers.

What about fueling during [exercise](#)? If your workout is under 60 minutes, drinking water is most likely enough.

The true measure is how you feel so experiment with both food and timing to find the right balance to maximize energy and minimize digestive issues.

More information: The American Council on Exercise has a detailed guide to [fueling before and after exercise](#) to maximize results.

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