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Post Workout Meal for Weight Loss

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Post Workout Meal for Weight Loss

Overview

Eating too many calories after a workout can sabotage weight-loss goals. Visualize the post-work out body. Muscles have been worked and need refueled to replenish nutrients and build muscle. According to University of Michigan researcher, Jeffery F. Horowitz, "...exercise doesn't occur in a vacuum, and it is very important to look at both the effects of exercise and what you're eating after exercise."

Protein and Workouts

Consuming protein after aerobic exercise encourages the hormone insulin to work more efficiently, according to a CBS News report on a study published in the "Journal of Applied

Physiology." Insulin supplies cells with constant energy. Insulin transfers sugar from the blood and relocates it into the body's cells. From there, sugar converts to energy during exercise or is stored as fat.

During a workout, muscles break down. Protein is the building block of muscle growth and repair. Protein takes longer to digest, which creates the sensation of fullness and uses no insulin to be digested since it has no carbohydrate.

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Considerations

The American Dietetic Association recommends reducing calories as an effective way to lose weight. Many registered dietitians suggest using a food journal or record during the day to effectively plan calories throughout the day. Keep post-workout meals between 200 and 400 calories and 6 to 18g of protein. For a 1,500-calorie weight loss plan, two meals could amount to 500 calories, with two additional mini-meals of 250 calories. One of the two remaining mini-meals can be a post-workout meal, which fits into the guidelines.

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Foods

To support weight loss and supply muscles with energy, select low-fat dairy or protein sources. Examples include: 2 to 4 oz. of chicken breast, 1 cup of 1 percent milk, one 6 oz. cup of yogurt or ¼ cup of nuts. Combine protein with whole grains, vegetables or fruits to meet the body's needs. Look for English muffins, breads, crackers or pastas with "100 percent whole grain" on the label. Drink a glass of low-fat milk, have 1 oz. of cheese with crackers, or bell pepper strips with 1 to 2 tbsp. of hummus, a Mediterranean chickpea dip. Finish with at least 20 oz. of water to replace lost fluids.

Benefits

For optimal post-workout recovery, consume a meal that contains carbohydrates and protein within two hours after exercise. Enzymes in the body replace carbohydrate stores and build muscles. When muscles grow, your body burns more calories, accelerating weight loss.

Misconceptions

Proper nutrition and exercise gradually change the shape of the body. Quick-fix diets and exercise programs are not sustainable for the long term. Working out without the proper nutrition will not help with weight-loss goals. Starving yourself and working out constantly will not lead you to healthy weight loss. A sensible workout plan with a low-calorie, protein-rich meal after exercising will help build muscle while still helping with weight loss.

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- [Mayo Clinic: Eating and exercise: Time it right to maximize your workout](#)
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Photo Credit

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About this Author

Gina Lesako, a registered dietitian, has been writing since 2005. She has been published in the "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette." Lesako holds a Bachelor of Science from Kent State University, and served as a dietetic intern at the University of Maryland.

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