

ENERGY

We are faced with many challenges that disrupt our normal eating and exercise schedules and routines. Between special events, holidays and family gatherings, it is quite easy to fall off-track. To help you stay on track and energized, let's focus on energy boosting foods. Energy boosting foods can help you maximize your workout, keep you feeling great and keep you on track! Furthermore, consuming a postworkout snack provides the body with the nutrients it needs to recover. Keep reading to learn more about natural foods that can give you that extra boost before and after your workout—and find a few new energizing recipes for smoothies, snacks and more.

Preworkout Snacks

Before performing, it is important to consume carbohydrate-rich foods to top off muscle stores and to eat small amounts of protein to help build muscle tissue. Taking in adequate protein before performance may also help reduce postexercise muscle soreness. Fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains are ideal before any workout.

One caveat: Before your workout, avoid foods that are high in fat or fiber. It is important to consume adequate amounts of fiber in the diet in order to promote a healthy gut, maintain a healthy weight, increase satiety and keep blood sugar stable. However, before exercise it is recommended to minimize high-fiber foods because they can be upsetting to the stomach. Eat these foods at least 3-4 hours before exercise, and remember to drink plenty of water.

Try these suggestions for a boost in energy before a workout:

Almonds. Almonds are a top source of antioxidants, such as flavonoids, phenolic acid and vitamin E, which protect the body from free radicals. Limit the portion to a handful.

Avocado. This unique fruit primarily consists of carbohydrates and healthy fats, but it's also high in vitamin K, C and folate. Before workouts, half of an avocado with 10 almonds pair well together.

Banana. These fruits are a good source of carbohydrates, as well as an important source of potassium. Potassium plays an essential role in muscle functions, and your body loses this nutrient through sweat. Thus it's a good idea to eat a banana before performing.

Eggs. These are an excellent source of high-quality protein and are very inexpensive. Eggs are considered a complete protein, meaning they contain all nine essential amino acids. So skip the protein powder before performance, and enjoy this delicious whole food instead.

Postworkout Meals

After exercise, it is important to replenish the body immediately with the nutrients it needs to recover and perform again. A nutritious postworkout meal will help replenish glycogen stores, promote protein synthesis and hydrate the body adequately. Be sure to choose meals or snacks that consist of lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, and whole grains. Here are some healthy energy boosting choices that can help in the body's recovery process:

Hummus. Hummus is made from garbanzo beans (chickpeas), which are an excellent source of protein. This popular dip also provides the body with carbs. Add a side of hummus to any meal.

Quinoa. This whole grain is an excellent source of protein. Eating quinoa can provide you with the protein and carbs that the body needs for tissue repair and recovery after a workout.

Salmon. Salmon is an excellent source of protein, vitamins and minerals (including selenium, potassium and vitamin B12), but it is salmon's content of omega-3's that receives more attention. Omega-3's are especially important in supporting brain function and a healthy heart. Most beneficial omega-3's are found in fish such as salmon.

Energy Boosting Recipes

The meals and snacks that follow are rich in whole grains, fruit, vegetables and lean proteins. These meals are full of vitamins and minerals, and they will keep you satisfied and full of energy throughout the day. (Key: T = tablespoon, t = teaspoon, C = cup, oz = ounces.)

Postworkout Recovery Smoothie

Breakfast starts the day and revs the metabolism. This smoothie is quick, simple, and offers a balance of proteins, carbs and fat. Servings: 1

½ C low-fat Greek yogurt

½ C frozen strawberries

½ C frozen blueberries

1 C spinach leaves

1 small banana

1 T peanut butter

½ C milk or milk alternative

In a blender, blend all ingredients until smooth. If desired, add more liquid for a thinner consistency.

Per serving: 363 calories, 11 g fat, 54 g carbohydrate, 16 g protein.

Postworkout Recovery Meal

Try this recipe that contains energy boosting foods post workout to help replenish the body with the nutrients it needs! Servings: 1

Quinoa-Salmon-Broccoli Bowl

1/3 C quinoa

1 scallion, thinly sliced

1/2 small head broccoli (about 1 1/4 C florets)

1/2 C cherry tomatoes

1 1/2 cloves garlic

1 T olive oil

Salt and pepper, to taste

6 oz salmon fillet

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly coat a baking sheet with the olive oil.

Rinse the quinoa under cold water. Drain well and add to a saucepan. Cook quinoa according to package directions. Remove cooked quinoa from the heat and let sit, covered, for 5 minutes. Add the scallions, and fluff with a fork.

While the quinoa is cooking, cut up the broccoli into florets. In a medium bowl, toss together the broccoli, tomatoes, garlic, oil and salt and pepper. Place the vegetables on the prepared baking sheet and roast them in the oven for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, sprinkle the salmon on both sides with the salt and pepper. Remove the baking tray with vegetables and nestle the salmon into the vegetables. Roast for another 12-15 minutes.

Place quinoa in a bowl, top with the salmon and vegetables. ENJOY!

Per serving: 452 calories, 42g protein, 20g fat, 261 mg sodium.

(Recipe from foodnetwork.com.)

Breakfast

Steel Cut Oats With Pears & Raisins

½ C steel cut oats

¾ C 2% milk

1 C diced pears

1 oz raisins

2 T chopped walnuts

Cook the oats on the stovetop, according to package directions. Add the milk. Remove from the heat and stir in the pears, raisins and walnuts.

Snack

Whole-Grain Toast With Peanut Butter and Honey

1 T peanut butter

1 t honey

1 slice whole-grain bread

Lunch

Shrimp Wrap

1 (8-inch) tortilla

½ avocado, diced

3 oz cooked shrimp, tails removed

¼ C black beans, drained and rinsed

¼ C spinach

2 T salsa

1 oz feta cheese

Fill the tortilla with the remaining ingredients.

Cucumber and Tomato Salad

½ C diced cucumber

½ C diced tomatoes

2 T balsamic vinegar

Toss ingredients together.

Snack

1/2 C carrots

¼ C hummus

Dinner

5oz lean roasted pork tenderloin

1/2 medium baked sweet potato

1 C roasted broccoli

Snack

1/4 C pomegranate seeds

1/4 C cashews, chopped or 1 (6oz) container of Greek yogurt