



Mary Mahoney R.D.

Nutrition Counseling and Consulting

## Nutrition Nibbles

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### Exercise Nutrition

May is warming up with sunny weather and summer is just around the corner. May is also National Physical Fitness and Sports Month. Moving your body on a regular basis is great for so many reasons including improved energy, heart health, blood sugar control, bone health, and mental outlook. I thought I'd take this opportunity to answer some common exercise-related nutrition questions.

**Is it alright to exercise on an empty stomach?** You can but you probably won't have the most effective workout. Eating before working out replenishes your muscle's fuel stores so you have energy to pull from, allowing you to push harder during your workouts. If you exercise first thing in the morning and are not able to eat a full meal beforehand, experiment with small amounts of carbohydrate-rich foods, like a banana or whole grain cereal. Don't forget to drink some water on your way to the gym too!

**Will eating protein strengthen my muscles?** Protein-rich foods help with muscle rebuilding and repair after a workout but it is carbohydrate that fuels your muscles to walk, run, spin, jump, dance, and lift. Working out your muscles makes them grow and carbohydrates help them do that most effectively. Don't reduce your carb intake in favor of protein. Eat carbs at each meal throughout the day, focusing on nutrient-rich whole grains, fruits, starchy vegetables, beans, and low-fat dairy.

**Should I use sports drinks, gels, beans, and bites when working out?** These sports nutrition aids are no more effective than real foods and fluids at stabilizing your energy and rehydrating your body during a workout. Some people find them more easily digestible and convenient, especially when competing in long races but you can also opt for real food choices and beverages. For example, when I'm speed walking a half-marathon, I like to refuel with half of a salted peanut butter sandwich on whole grain bread with water.

**What should I eat after my workout to recover?** Post-workout, it is best to refuel with some carbohydrate (to replenish your muscle stores), a little protein (to help with muscle repair), and a minimum of 16 ounces of water. The perfect post-workout snack? An apple with all-natural peanut butter and a bottle of water. If you don't feel like eating, try a glass of chocolate milk--it is a great source of carb and protein.

Enjoy movin' it this month!

Questions or Comments? Email me at  
[marymahoneyrd@gmail.com](mailto:marymahoneyrd@gmail.com)