

Be it formal sports, intramurals or just going to the gym, activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Research shows over and over that people of all ages can improve their health and well being by becoming active on a regular basis. More importantly, we now know that the old adage “no pain, no gain” is not the way you have to go! In fact, regular, moderate activity helps to reduce the risk for heart disease, hypertension, and stroke, manage weight, and even reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

There are also many other **benefits** of exercise

- ✓ Stronger bones
- ✓ Stronger muscles
- ✓ More endurance
- ✓ Stress relief and better sleep
- ✓ Better coordination and flexibility

Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, more than 60% of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits. More than 25% are not active at all in their leisure time. Activity decreases with age and is less common among women than men and among those with lower income and less education.

This month Bon Appétit will examine ways to become more active as well as nutritional issues that affect our ability to maintain regular activity. Whether you train for competitive sports, work out for health or just for the fun of it, your food choices play a crucial role in your athletic success. By fueling your body with the right foods you can increase your endurance as well as prevent dehydration and injury.

How much activity is enough?

The good news is that scientific evidence shows that physical activity done at a moderate-intensity level can produce health benefits (USDHHS, 1996). While it is true that activity at a higher intensity or performed longer offers more health benefits, this level of activity may not be a realistic goal for everyone, at least not to start with. Many Americans, for whom the term “exercise” brings up negative images and emotions, can celebrate the good news by setting a new personal goal-achieving and enjoying the benefits of a regularly active lifestyle that includes a variety of moderate-and/or vigorous-intensity activities.

Adults should strive to meet either of the following physical activity recommendations.

Adults should engage in moderate physical activities for at least 30 minutes on 5 or more days of the week.

– Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/American College of Sports Medicine

OR

Adults should engage in vigorous physical activity 3 or more days per week for 20 or more minutes per occasion

– Healthy People 2010

Examples of **moderate activity** include the effort a healthy individual might expend while walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, or bicycling on level terrain.

Examples of **vigorous activity** include the effort a healthy individual might expend while jogging, mowing the lawn with a non-motorized push mower, chopping wood, participating in high-impact aerobic dancing, swimming continuous laps, or bicycling uphill.

Eating for an Active Lifestyle



This information is not intended to take the place of advice from a health care professional. Check with your physician before starting any diet or exercise program. In addition, while all efforts have been made to ensure the information included in this material is correct, new research that is released frequently, may invalidate certain pieces of data.

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BON APPÉTIT

Now that you know the importance of regular activity, how do you fuel your body for maximum performance? An active lifestyle requires a regular intake of the carbohydrate, protein and fat as well as vitamins, minerals and water. Each of these plays a role in athletic performance, and without the right balance, your energy level will suffer. Use these tips along with the wide variety of foods offered in your Bon Appétit café to make choices that will fuel your body!

The main fuel source for working muscles are **carbohydrates**. Despite much recent attention to the contrary, carbohydrates are still the preferred fuel for an active lifestyle.

How does this work?

Carbohydrates in the form of starches and sugars break down in the body to form blood glucose. Blood glucose is used to meet immediate energy needs or stored as glycogen in the liver and muscles for later activity. Carbohydrates **DO NOT** become body fat unless you take in more total calories than your body needs. When you exercise, the body requires a mix of both carbohydrate and fat to fuel muscles. For best performance, choose carbohydrate foods that are less refined and more “complex” such as whole grain bread and pastas, beans, brown rice, cereals, potatoes with the skin as well as a variety of fruits and vegetables.

Fat is also used as fuel during exercise, but keep in mind . . . even the leanest person carries over 100,000 calories worth of fat in storage. As a result, it is not necessary to refuel fat stores everyday to support regular activity. In fact, fat takes time to digest and too much dietary fat can leave you feeling sluggish before a workout. Aim for a reasonable amount of fat in your diet . . . enough to flavor foods but not displace other calories. Aim for more healthy fats such as oils, nuts, seeds and fats you get from fish.

Protein plays a role in exercise but it might not be what you think. Protein is not the best source of fuel for you muscles and in fact, a diet high in protein and low in carbohydrates will limit your endurance . . . and your ability to sustain your workout.

The body does use protein for a variety of purposes including building and maintaining muscle tissue. The trick is to get enough protein to meet this need but not too much. Extra protein is not stored in your body for future use as protein but rather it can become body fat.

How much protein do you need?

Most “everyday athletes” can meet protein needs in a relatively small amount of dietary protein. Current recommendations range from .8 - 1.7 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight although the upper end applies to athletes during muscle gaining stages.

To calculate your needs

$$\text{Current body weight} \div 2.2 = \text{_____ (kg)}$$

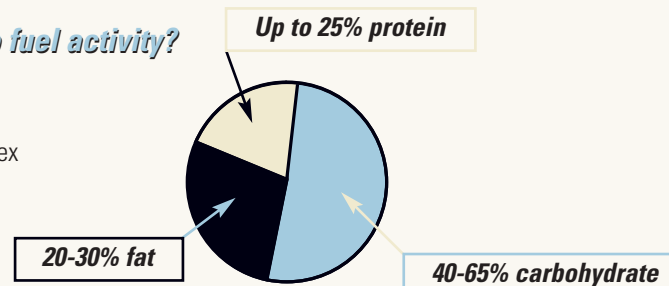
$$\text{Kg body weight} \times .8 - 1.7 = \text{_____grams protein per day.}$$

When choosing protein in your diet, remember protein is found in vegetables, grains, and dairy foods as well as animal foods. Contrary to popular belief, when you have a balanced diet, your body is able to utilize protein from all of these sources. Check out the following protein contents of common foods:

Food	Portion	Protein (grams)
Vegetables	1/2 cup	2-3
Grains	1/2 cup	2-3
Beans	1/3 cup	7
Milk	1 cup	8
Yogurt	1 cup	8
Cheese	1 oz.	5
Eggs	1 whole	6
Egg white	1	4
Chicken	1 oz.	7
Fish	1 oz.	7
Beef/pork	1 oz.	7

So, what's the best mix of these nutrients to fuel activity?

The best diet for fueling activity is still a mix of the basic nutrients. Each of these nutrients provides a separate and unique role in an active lifestyle so aim for a mix of complex carbohydrates, protein and fat for the best energy level!



Tips for Choosing a High Performance Diet

Make sure you have adequate calorie intake. Inadequate calorie intake leaves you feeling sluggish and unmotivated. Active people will find they need to eat regular meals and possibly add snacks to cover their energy needs. Keep snacks handy and check out the grab-n-go selections in your Bon Appétit café for quick ideas to refuel. Even when weight is a concern, try cutting calories slightly as opposed to severe calorie restrictions that leave you listless and tired.

Choose some type of complex carbohydrate paired with lean protein at most meals and snacks. You will have a more consistent energy level if you give your body a regular source of fuel for the muscles. This is especially true if you are active on and off throughout the day. Examples include cereal and milk, turkey sandwich or wrap, yogurt with whole fruit, crackers with peanut butter or cheese, grilled chicken and brown rice, shrimp stir-fry with noodles. No matter what your preference, look for the carb/protein combo for lasting fuel!

Consider your timing. A large or higher fat meal or snack too close to a workout can decrease your performance. Experiment with what makes you feel the best, but most people find they can have a small meal or snack one to two hours before a heavy workout. If you have a heavier meal, give yourself more time . . . it might take four to six hours to fully digest.

Energy needs during a workout vary with time and intensity. Most people find they do not need to fuel up during workouts of 60 minutes or less. However, longer workouts may require intake of easily digestible carbohydrates such as fruit, diluted fruit juice or a sports drink.

Refuel after your workout. To ensure that your muscles recover and are ready for another workout, aim to eat some carbohydrates within 2 hours of a heavy workout. Protein at this time will also aid the muscles in their recovery . . . leaving you strong for your next activity!

Make sure you get enough fluid. Dehydration can decrease performance for an event or routine workout. Most people lose 1-2 quarts of water per day not considering what is lost during exercise. It is important to replace this fluid with decaffeinated beverages, so aim for 4-6 glasses a day. Also consider calories, many fruit juices and sports drinks pack a significant punch where calories are concerned.

