

Sport Health

Really Simple Energy Rules for Sport and Exercise

Good energy doesn't come from eating sugar, particularly if it's going to be a long game, match or day. Taking in simple carbohydrates (sugar, corn syrup, honey, cane sugar, white flour like pasta, or white-ish flour like wheat bread) before an event will cause a quick spike in blood sugar followed by a fall. Moreover, simple carbohydrates and excess complex carbohydrates will cause sluggishness and hamper performance.

If you want to create energy naturally, here are five simple rules to follow:

1. Just before a game or hard workout, eat some complex/simple carbohydrates like fruits, including apples, plums, pears, citrus fruit (not juice) and berries. They're great right before a game or workout as they give you a small spike without the massive plummet.
2. Two to three hours before a game or hard workout, complex carbohydrates, fats and small amount of protein will do the trick. Sweet potatoes, brown rice, olive oil, almond butter, flax oil, walnuts, almonds and eggs are all easy to digest and should give you more sustained energy for the day. (With all pre-game, and even "night before," game and workout foods, the trick is to look for things that will give you energy and sit well while you play. This combination will be different for everyone, however.)
3. During a game or hard work out and immediately afterward, in terms of simple carbohydrates, sports drinks and sports bars containing sugary carbohydrates could replace all those lost carbohydrates immediately following exertion. But, weigh your options carefully as you're still using brands containing chemicals, colourings and preservatives that aren't good for you at all. Instead, sweeteners like honey, maple, cane or brown rice syrup are more natural and can be found in many healthier bars and powders.
4. After the game or workout is long done, your body is nitrogen-poor and your muscles have been broken down. That's why you need amino acids from animal proteins like chicken, fish, beef and eggs as well as complex carbohydrates (sweet potatoes or brown rice).
5. Although many experts have advised athletes to load up on carbohydrates before a long-distance event, fact is, burning sugar is not what happens over long distances. After a short period of time, particularly at slower paces, the body is burning fats.

Therefore, rather than loading up on carbohydrates, more long distance runners are loading up on fats and small amounts of proteins prior to racing, with no more carbohydrates than the body can easily store anyway. Toward the end of extremely long races, only then may you find it necessary to replace those carbohydrates with a glucose drink or gel.

It is also essential to replenish fluid. This is best done using electrolytes (electrically charged minerals that attach to water molecules and carry water into the cell).