

Should You Eat Before A Workout?

Should you eat before a workout has long been a great debate. Do you burn more fat if you train on an empty stomach? What if I train early in the morning and can't stomach food that early? These questions are very common. Allow me to give you a little bit of guidance...

Should you eat before a workout? Ideally yes. The main reason you should eat before a workout is so that you can put your 100% effort into it. The science behind the exact process of carb and fat utilisation for energy is long and confusing so let's keep it simple. Carbs are the body's favourite source of fuel. Carbohydrate stores in the body deplete over time, especially during an overnight fast. Carbs are metabolised much faster than fats to produce the body with energy. But if they are depleted, they have no choice but to use fat for fuel. You might think, 'great, that's exactly what I want!', BUT... If you were to do a high intensity workout, anything more than a light steady walk, the fat metabolism will not be able to keep up with the energy requirements. That means you will not be able to maintain that intensity throughout the entire workout. You will burn more calories during and after a high intensity workout using both fat and carbs for fuel, than you would during a light steady state workout. So long story short, it makes sense to have a quick nibble before heading out the door, give yourself enough energy to really work hard through that workout, and reap the calorie burning benefits, rather than trying to purely burn fat to fuel your workout.

What if I train early and can't stomach food that early? This is where it can become tricky. Yes, you want to try to eat something before a workout but not everyone can stomach it. Ideally you want to have food about an hour before a workout. But if you train at 6am, who is going to set their alarm 1 hour earlier just so they can eat something... I know I would prefer the sleep in. Best way to do it, find what works for you. I personally could eat a big breakfast and still get right into a workout, but that is me. If you can only stomach half a banana, great, do that. Maybe a piece of toast with vegemite or peanut butter is more your thing. Experiment with different foods to find what sits best for you. At the very least, try a coffee for the caffeine boost to help you endure through that high intensity workout. You may find over time you are able to tolerate more food and different foods. Just give it time for your body to get used to it.

Moral of the story. Try to eat something before a workout to ensure you are working at a high intensity to burn maximum calories. This in turn will help burn more fat over the course of the day than just trying to burn fat during a low intensity workout. Find what works best for you. Everyone will be different so it will be a very personal preference. What you should eat before a workout is a completely different topic, but for the meantime, try to eat something, even if it only small.

