

What is the window of opportunity?

Failing to consume some form of food or snack within 15-20 minutes of finishing training can severely delay recovery, prevent you from adapting and benefiting from the session, and can make you more susceptible to colds and infections.

In order to get the full benefits of exercise, we need to consume food, in the form of carbohydrate and protein, within 15 to 20 minutes of finishing exercise. After a particularly difficult session, a snack may be required before commencing your cool down. Consuming a recovery snack will replace energy reserves which have been depleted, start the recovery process, and prevent the release of cortisol, a stress hormone (exercise is a form of stress) which breaks down muscle.



A larger meal, which should replace all the energy used, should be consumed within two hours of finishing exercise; sooner if possible. Those who find it difficult to eat straight after exercise, should try eating an apple or some grapes to begin with. Both contain a chemical which helps to increase appetite.

What should the recovery snack contain?

- Carbohydrates to replace muscle and liver glycogen stores and to suppress cortisol secretion - This is one time when quick release carbohydrates (ie simple sugars) are ok, and often encouraged.
- Protein to assist with muscle repair (and after a weights session to promote muscle growth)
- Fluids to rehydrate (and perhaps some salt or electrolytes after prolonged training in the heat)
- Vitamins, minerals etc to support the immune system (esp Vitamins C & E, Zinc, Glutamine & Probiotics)

Finding post exercise snacks that work for you will take some experimentation, so don't be afraid to try a number of options. Below are some suggestions:

Carbohydrates	Proteins	Fluids	Immune system
Breakfast cereals/Cereal bars	Eggs (poached, scrambled)	Water	Pieces of fruit
Fig rolls/Jaffa cakes	Chicken or turkey	Sports drinks	Smoothies
Bread/Malt loaf/Potato cakes	Nuts and seeds	Fruit squash	Raw vegetables
Crackers/Rice cakes/Oat cakes	Milk, yoghurt, cottage cheese	Fruit juice	Green tea
Pasta salad/Couscous salad	Beans	Smoothies	Nuts and seeds
Honey/Jam	Smoked salmon/tinned tuna	Coconut water	Yoghurt
Homemade flapjack	Peanut/almond butter	Milk	
Bananas	Humus		

For when you have access to a kitchen

If you finish your training at or close to home, you'll have a better choice of foods. It's still a good idea to have things prepared beforehand, so that you can both snack and shower in quick time.

- Beans on toast and a glass of orange juice
- Poached egg on toast, an apple and fruit squash
- Scrambled egg on toast and fruit juice
- A fistful of nuts and seeds and a fruit smoothie made with yoghurt
- Bowl of porridge with banana, blueberries, nuts and seeds and a green tea
- Toasted bagel with scrambled egg and smoked salmon and a fruit juice
- Pancakes or wraps with honey, banana and lemon juice, fruit yoghurt and water
- Breakfast cereal, pineapple and chocolate milk
- Toast with nut butter and banana and fruit juice
- Baked potato with tuna and salad and hot chocolate
- Toasted crumpet with jam, fruit salad and a yoghurt

For when you don't have access to a kitchen

If you are not finishing your training at home, you'll need to be more prepared. Same rules apply - something with carbohydrates, something with protein, something with vitamins, and some fluid.

- Cereal bar, yoghurt, fruit juice and water
- Brown soda bread with jam, a pear and a milkshake
- Chicken salad sandwich or roll and drinking yoghurt
- Rice cakes with peanut butter and banana and fruit juice
- Sticks of carrots, peppers and celery and pitta bread with hummus or cottage cheese and fruit squash
- Wholegrain crackers with smoked salmon and cream cheese with ice tea.
- Scone with jam, milkshake and fruit squash
- Homemade flapjack (with nuts, seeds and dried fruit) with chocolate milk
- Natural yoghurt with granola or muesli, nuts, seeds and fresh fruit and water
- Hot cross bun or homemade sponge cake with jam, chicken drumstick and fruit juice