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10 Healthy Pre-Workout Snacks to Boost Your Energy

What to eat to help you conquer the elliptical.



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by LORI KEONG Aug 30, 2016

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Eating before a workout can be a precarious business. Too much food and you could end up with stomach cramps and indigestion, while exercising on an empty stomach can feel draining, depending on your body type. To figure out the right way to prepare ourselves for a standard day at the gym, we spoke to [Mary Jane Detroyer](#)—a personal trainer, certified nutritionist, and registered dietitian based in New York City— about eating before a workout, the types of snacks that work best for your body, and timing eating around a workout.

First Things First: Do You Actually Need a Pre-Workout Snack?

Detroyer says that the important thing to ask yourself before starting a workout is whether or not you actually need sustenance beforehand. All of this boils down to your body type, the intensity of your workout, and the last time you ate. Follow her handy guide below:



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1. "If someone **goes to the gym and does 30 minutes on the elliptical at a very low intensity**, and they're not hungry, they probably don't need a pre-gym snack. They're just adding calories when they may not need them."
2. "If someone's **underweight and they know with their metabolism**, they could eat all day long because they get hungry a lot, they're definitely going to need a snack."
3. "If it's **someone who's trying to lose weight, and they had a decent lunch**, and they're not really hungry and they're not

doing a crazy heavy workout, they can probably wait to go home and have a good dinner afterwards."

4. "If someone is going to be at the **gym for an hour**, they really don't need anything but a 16 oz. bottle of water. Unless they ate a long time before and they're starting to feel really hungry around 4:30PM, then they could have something small. This person needs to go eat pretty soon afterwards, too, not go have cocktails with friends."

What Types of Foods Should People Snack On?

According to Detroyer, the foods people should look out for contain carbohydrates: namely fruit, dairy, and grains. She says to shoot for anything between a range of 100 and 250 calories, which will accommodate everyone from a smaller person with a lighter workout to a taller, bigger person doing a more intense workout.



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Carbohydrates are what your body needs to perform any kind of physical exercise, even weight training—rather than protein—Detroyer notes. "You need to have something that's going to get into the bloodstream and stay there throughout the workout. So you wouldn't want to have a lot of fat or too much protein or too much fiber because those things slow the way the food is absorbed into the bloodstream."

Below, her suggestions on the best healthy snacks that fall within the 100 to 250 calorie range:

1. **A piece of fruit:** "It doesn't really matter what kind of fruit it is. It could be an apple, it could be a pear. It could be some watermelon, grapes, or a banana. And you could have a few nuts with that, a very small handful just to tide you over."
2. **Fruit with a mozzarella stick:** "It's not a lot of fat, with just a little bit of protein—the focus here is on the fruit."
3. **Whole grain crackers like Triscuits:** "They have a little bit of fiber, and you could spread some type of cheese on them, like Laughing Cow (it doesn't have to be low-fat). There's not too much fat in there and there's not too much protein, so it won't slow you down."
4. **Crackers with a tiny little bit of hummus on them:** "Aim for about a quarter of a cup. Hummus consists of beans, something with a little fiber in it. It's going to give you some energy that will stick throughout the workout."



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5. Regular yogurt, instead of Greek-style: "A Greek-style yogurt is almost all protein, if it's a plain yogurt. If you use a regular yogurt it has more carbohydrates in it, so it's going to fuel your workout. And if you wanted to have fruit in it, that's fine because there's an instance where the sugar in the fruit is going to help you throughout your workout."

6. Hummus with veggies or hummus with a cut-up apple: "Again, hummus has a little bit of fiber in it, and the carbohydrates from the fruit and veggies will help."

7. A smoothie: "Most of them are too big and they have too many calories, but if you mix a cup of fruit with a cup of milk or a cup of soy milk or almond milk, you could mix that up. A cup of fruit has about 60 calories, a cup of any of these milks has about 50 to 90 calories, and any one of these variations would carry you through your workout."

8. A small bowl of bean and veggie soup: "Let's say it's winter time and you're going to the gym and it's about 5:00 p.m. and you haven't eaten since 1:00 p.m. With this snack, you're getting carbohydrates from the beans, carbohydrates from the vegetables, and the fluid and fiber will fill you up and carry you through your workout."

9. A piece of toast with a little bit of peanut butter or almond butter: "This would work for someone who's waking up and wants to eat something before working out later in the morning. It's not a lot of calories. We're talking probably 100 to 150 calories."

Timing Is Important



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"What's really important and very individualized is that whoever's eating the snack wants to have it far enough before the workout that it doesn't cause indigestion. Also it's key to avoid food that will cause you to feel uncomfortable during your workout," Detroyer says.

"By having food an **hour and a half before the workout**, the food will already be in your system, the energy will be in you bloodstream because of the way you're eating, and it will be there for you to call on."

And as for post-workout food? "Depends on when people eat after their workout and depends on the intensity of the workout, but a good rule of thumb is that the meal following a workout should definitely have protein in it. Because your body is now repairing and you want to make sure you have protein in your body to maintain and build muscle."

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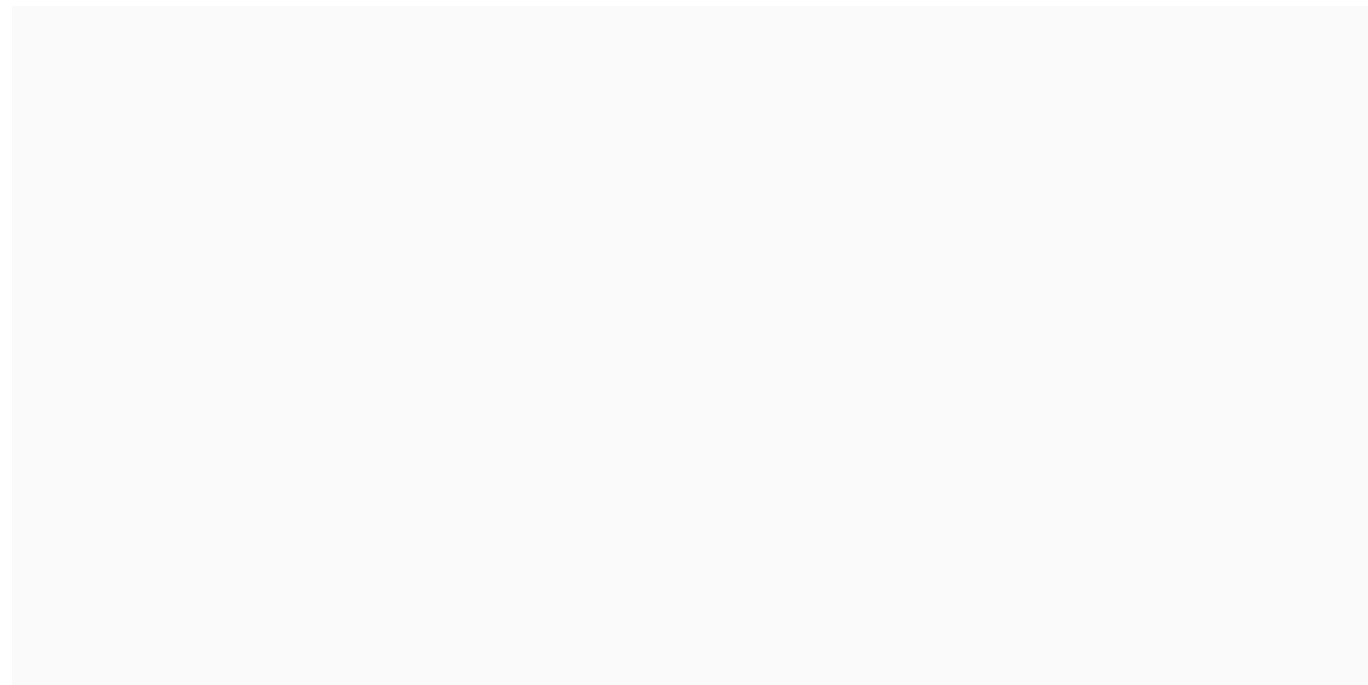
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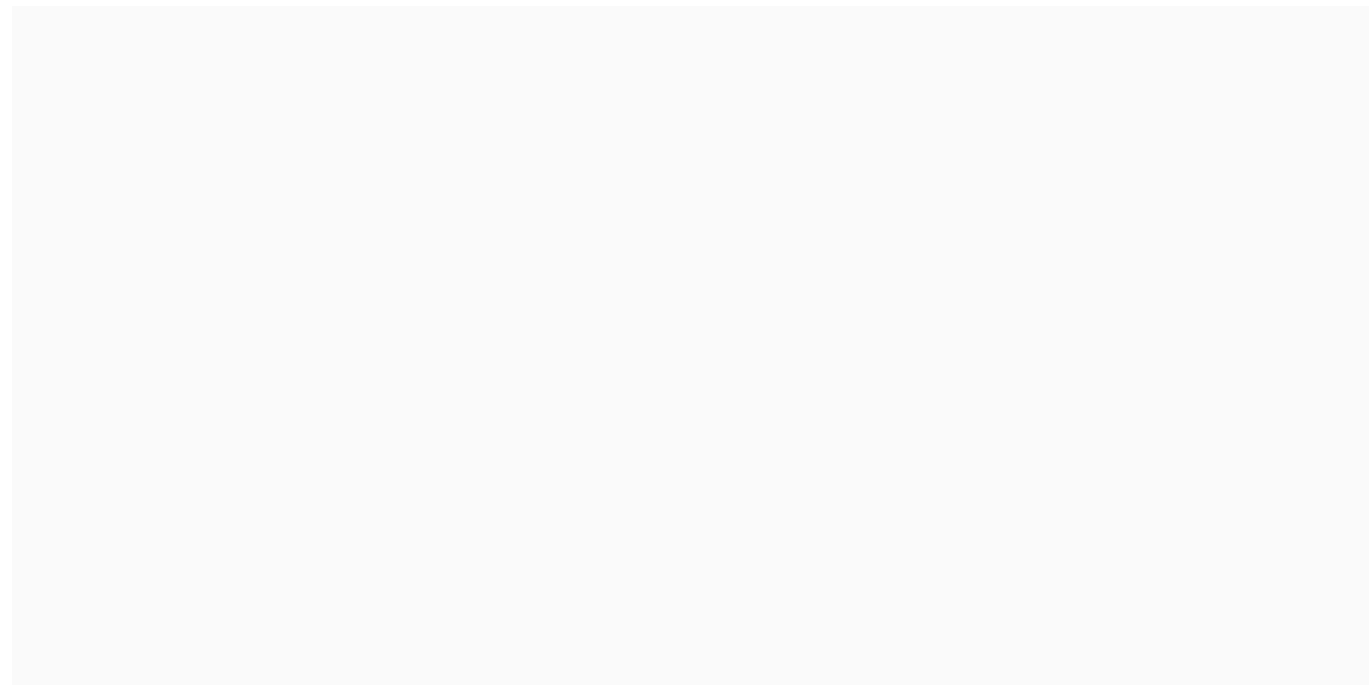
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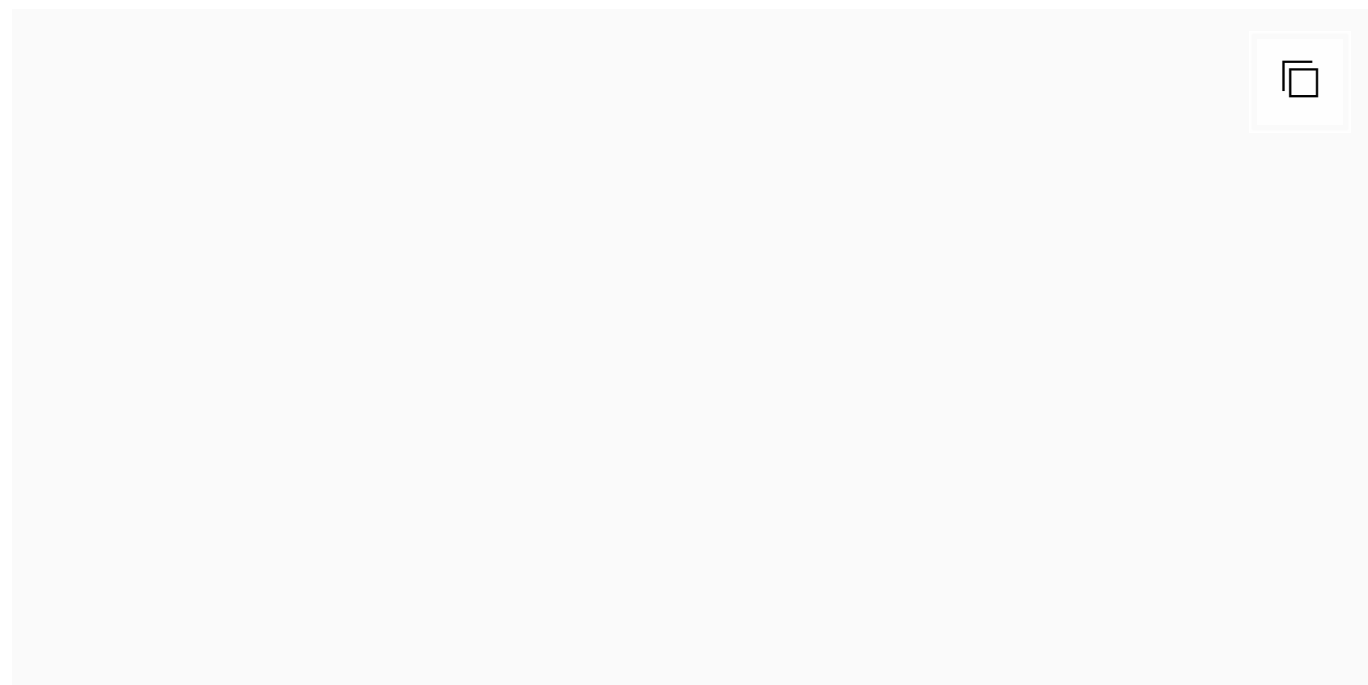
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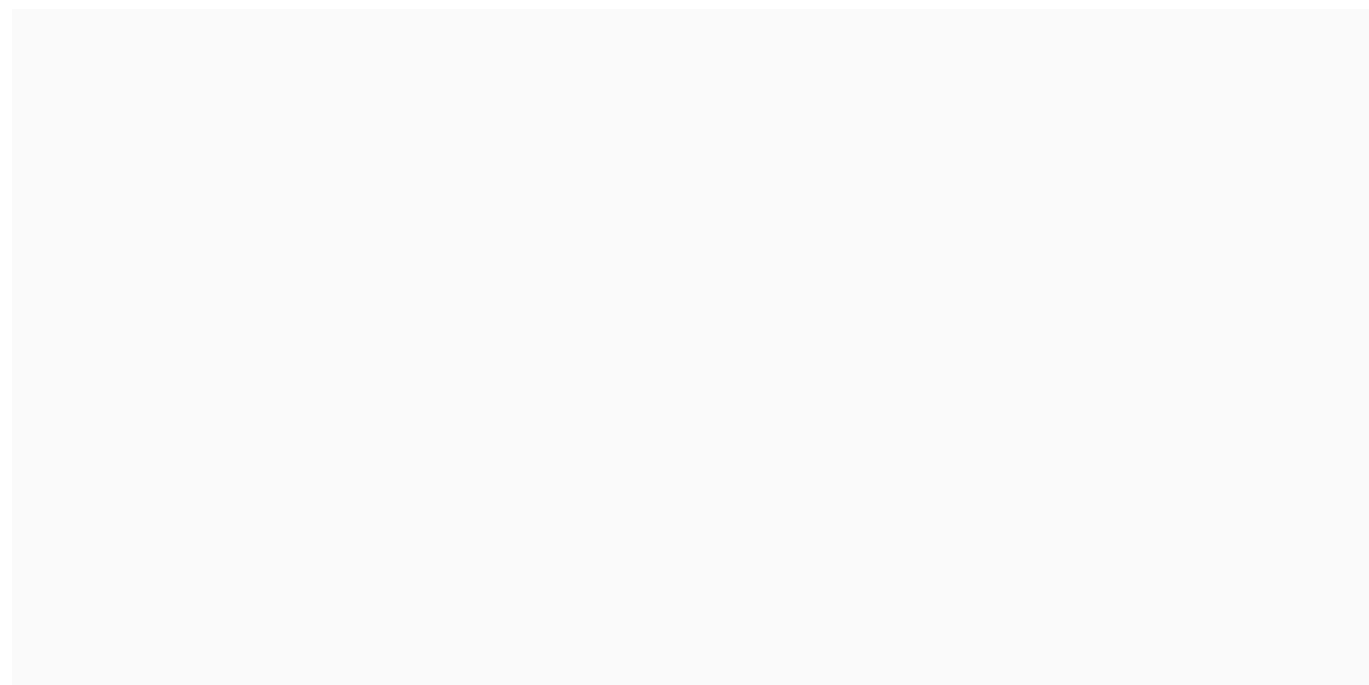
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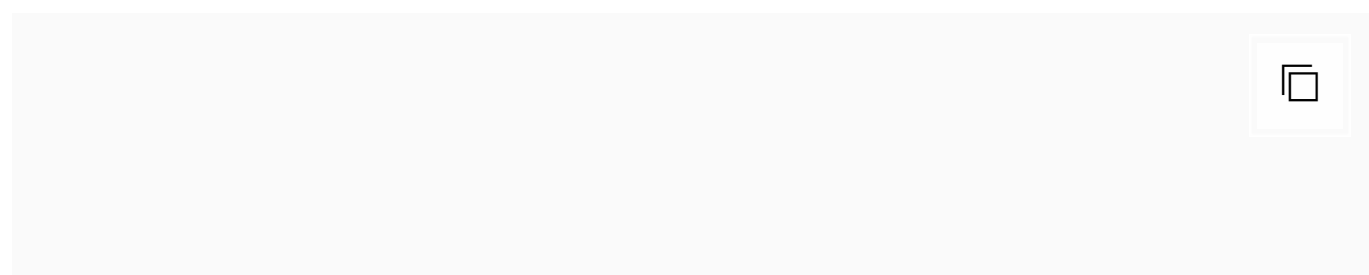
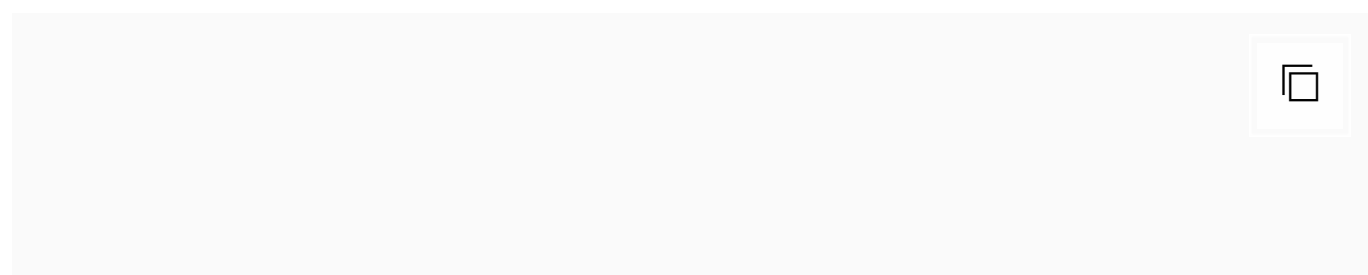
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