

TIME FOR EXERCISE!

Before or After Breakfast?

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“Should I exercise before or after breakfast?”

This is one of the most common questions asked by people looking to lose some weight.

The theory behind recommending exercise before breakfast is to force the body to use fat as our main energy source after a night of fasting that leaves our body low in glucose.

It has been hypothesised that exercising on an empty stomach in the morning can help to burn about 20% more body fat than those who take their breakfast before exercising.

Although some studies have suggested that performance and intensity may be compromised when exercising in a fasted state, evidence has shown that exercising in a fasted state at the intensity of about 77% heart rate max or 65% VO₂ max (maximal oxygen consumption or uptake) at a prolonged duration of 60 to 90 minutes can still stimulate adaptations of fat oxidation in muscle cells even in trained athletes.

A six-week study also shows that despite having a high caloric (30% more), high fat (50%) diet, exercising in a fasted state reduces weight gain, improves fat oxidation, glucose tolerance and insulin resistance.

Another research has shown that doing moderate intensity exercise in the morning without breakfast did not lead to eating more later in the day. This shows that exercising in the morning without breakfast can reduce the effect of occasional overindulgence in food.

However, there is still not enough evidence showing long-term benefits.



Other research has also found that fasting, cutting diets and exercising on an empty stomach in the morning increases our cortisol level, a stress hormone that slows down our metabolic rate. It makes us hungrier, causing us to crave calorie-rich food, reduces whole day energy level and slows down fat loss. The author suggests increasing metabolism through eating smarter and gaining muscle mass as a more effective approach.

Weight loss is a long-term battle that requires discipline, consistency and knowledge in terms of the right food choices and physical activities.

There are always social, cultural and health issues that may sabotage our weight loss plan along the way. Thus, establishing habits towards healthy eating, manageable daily physical activities, a good sleeping pattern, together with intermittent vigorous exercise at least once a week are important factors in a long-term plan.

Should any of the issues surface, occasional intermittent fasting together with moderate intensity exercise in the morning with an empty stomach could be a good choice if it does not lead you to feel more hungry and increase food consumption.

Recommended cardio exercises include brisk walking, jogging, cycling or swimming. Duration and intensity will depend on your fitness level. Start from 20 minutes to 90 minutes of continuous exercise at the intensity of 60 to 80% of maximum heart rate.

For people with diabetes, discuss with your doctor and make sure your condition is well under control and that the exercise does not lead to hypoglycaemia. Begin with a shorter duration and progress slowly from there.