

## How to Break the Habit of Overeating after a Workout

One of the biggest mistakes we make after completing a hard workout is rewarding our hard work and dedication with food. When we do this, we often crave unhealthy treats and/or unhealthy portion sizes after a workout. Most of the time we reward ourselves for exercise when we consider it a chore rather than doing it for pleasure and enjoyment. When we do this, our exercise efforts are counteracted by our consumption habits. We eat back all the calories we just burned if not more, and some (or many) of those calories may do little to help us recover from our workouts.

### How do we break this habit?

A key element to avoid overeating is to change the way we perceive exercise, which in turn influences how much we eat after exercising. If we perceive our exercise to be fun and enjoyable, it helps us resist unhealthy foods after a workout. You don't feel the need to reward yourself for doing something you enjoy doing.

Furthermore, the body requires key nutrients for optimal repair following exercise. Exercise is a form of stress, but with proper recovery, the body will come back stronger. The side effects associated with adequate recovery following exercise include weight loss, muscle gain, a stronger immune system, and so much more. If the body does not recover, exercise can cause pain, irritability, a lowered immune system, and even illness.

## IS THIS FUN OR EXERCISE?

TRY THINKING OF EXERCISE AS FUN AND  
YOU WILL EAT LESS AFTERWARDS



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### **Tips to make exercising fun and enjoyable:**

- Listen to music while you work out, create a special pump up playlist!
- Workout with a friend or get your whole family involved
- Read a book or magazine
- Listen to an audiobook
- Watch your favorite TV show
- Visualize a positive, motivating situation where you continually feel your performance improving as you go through the workout

### **Tips for healthy refueling after exercising:**

Whether you are overeating to reward yourself or you work hard enough to really stir up a large appetite, it is important to properly refuel your body after exercising.

- Drink water! Rehydrating is super important for replacing all the water lost from exercising and can help manipulate our cravings.
- Eat fruits and vegetables with high water content. They are perfect to help your body rehydrate and sooth cravings, as well as provide vitamins and minerals to raise your immune system. Some examples include watermelon, cucumbers, celery, zucchini tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, baby carrots.
- Choose different snacks for different workouts including a combination of protein and complex carbohydrates.
- Remember that shorter duration workouts = fewer calories needed to replenish and higher intensity workouts = more carbohydrates, protein, and calories to repair damaged tissues and lower systemic inflammation.

### **Use rewards that are not associated with food**

- Reward yourself with new fitness gear
- Relaxing movie night
- Massage
- Remember: exercise automatically gives us rewards! Exercises reduces stress, gives us more energy and puts us in a better mood!

### **Reference:**

<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/discoveries/fueled-treats>

<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/research/it-fun-or-exercise-framing-physical-activity-biases-subsequent-snacking>

<http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/research/just-thinking-about-exercise-makes-me-serve-more-food-physical-activity-and-calorie>