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What You Need to Eat to Support your Home Workout and a Healthy Lifestyle.

Your workout zone is now at home, it is not quite the same, but you will give it a red hot go even alone! As you are putting in the hard yards you want to see benefit from your workout and that means, supporting your body with the best foods you can.

Where do I start to serve the healthiest plate?

As I tell the elite athletes I work with, it is about choosing foods that have the greatest concentration of nutrients (i.e. nutrient dense), like getting the most value for your money! These foods are usually the lesser processed foods, mostly eaten in their natural (or close to) form. This means each meal (and preferably snacks) should have the following components:

Foods packed with:

- Vitamins, minerals and antioxidants for repair, recovery, immunity and general health; such as vegetables, fruit, legumes, extra virgin olive oil, nuts, seeds and wholegrains
- Protein to build and restore muscle and tissues from a combination of lean meats, fish, legumes, milk, yoghurt, cheese and nuts such as almonds
- Quality carbohydrates for energy, dietary fibre and B group vitamins used in energy production. Choose wholegrains most of the time such as brown rice, wholegrain breads and breakfast cereals (oats, porridge, muesli), quinoa, freekeh. Also, fruit and vegetables such as potato, legumes and corn.
- Healthy fats to help absorb nutrients, produce hormones and possibly help reduce inflammation (e.g. extra virgin olive oil, [almonds](#), avocados). (1, 2)

An easy way to think about how to fill you [plate for an athlete](#) (3) or even 'home athletes' is to divide your plate into thirds:

- one third protein food
- one third carbohydrate
- one third vegetables

This will give you more carbohydrate and protein than the average person to support your exercise routine.

For those of us sitting most of the day maybe doing a 30minute home workout for general fitness a few times a week we are more suited to fill our [plate with](#) : (4)

- half a plate of vegetables
- one quarter carbohydrate
- one quarter protein.

A quarter of the plate is around a fist size with a bigger person likely to have a larger fist, which makes sense on what they will need.

How much and when should I eat?

Eating to support your hard work is a balancing act, between enough food to fuel and repair, but not excess to leave you sluggish or with unwanted weight gain, particularly if you have been sitting down working from home most of the day.

Eating your standard main meal around 2 hours before a workout and maybe a small snack such as a piece of fruit or handful of almonds works well if your workout is less than 90minutes and not high intensity. If it is going to be a longer, intense session and particularly if you are looking for muscle gain, top up with an extra small meal or snack that has carbohydrate and protein foods an hour before the workout. The carbohydrate is important to fuel the session sparing the protein to be used for muscle growth and repair. A small bowl of cereal, a tub of yoghurt with chopped almonds or a fruit smoothie would do the trick. You need to do this again after the workout if the plan is to gain weight and muscle mass.

It can be tempting to raid the fridge or pantry after the workout, however stop, if you are working out to maintain strength (rather than gain mass), and for general health and enjoyment, it is generally not necessary to add extra food into your day. Move the timing of your food around and eat what would be your next usual next meal or snack after the session if that is what you feel like or just wait until that time arrives.

What about protein?

Do make sure you include enough protein whatever your workout regime as we all want to maintain and repair the muscle we have. The [research](#) (5) shows that 25-30grams of protein per meal is an optimal amount of protein for the body to use. The body is limited to how much protein it can use at one time, hence the 25-30grams per meal guide rather than one big meal at the end of the day

Workout meal and snack ideas:

Main Meal

Main meals can include a great range of cuisines, from family favourites such as lasagne (add in extra veg), minestrone soup, Buddah style bowls, roasts, stir fries and curries. Remember to come back to the components of carbohydrate, protein, vegetables and healthy fats in the serving sizes suggested above.

Snacks:

- Smoothie- fist size of fruit, handful of almonds, milk, yoghurt
- Rice pudding with cinnamon, crushed almonds and pumpkin seeds on top
- Bowl of minestrone soup
- Corn on the cob with melted cheese
- Anti-pasta platter- olives, almonds, cherry tomatoes, wholegrain crackers, cheese
- Home made savoury muffin with zucchini, corn, cheese, crushed nuts
- Wholegrain toast with nut spread, banana, drizzle of honey
- Hummus dip with cut veg
- Hard boiled egg and lettuce wrap
- Scrambled eggs with handful of spinach on wholegrain toast
- Can of tuna, salmon or sardines on crackers with tomato
- Fresh berries with almonds and dark chocolate

The home workout combined with a nourishing diet, are powerful tools for us all to live healthy active lives!

References:

1. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4997300/>
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