

# START Nutrition

## New Year Resolutions

By Dr. Robert Portman

Following the holidays, many people make their annual New Year's resolution to get in shape. That's why January and February are called "the resolution months." Unfortunately, many people approach their new weight-loss program with ideas based on myths that are counterproductive.

The first such idea is "no pain, no gain." You try to get back in shape in one day by working out so hard you can hardly raise your arms or walk because your muscles are so sore. Since you've gained a few pounds during the holidays, you try to see how long you can go without eating after a workout. You think, "The two keys to losing weight are working out and eating less. So, why not combine them and speed up the process?" Finally, as part of your new weight-loss program, you stop eating sugar, since all those holiday desserts and sweets are what caused you to gain weight in the first place.

Most people would be very surprised to learn that the above approach will actually make getting into shape harder, not easier.

### Commonly Held Misconceptions:

- ❖ Working your muscles until they are extremely sore will slow the build-up of muscle strength and prevent you from having an effective workout the next day.
- ❖ Not eating after a workout will probably cause you to gain more body fat instead of losing it.
- ❖ Eliminating simple sugars is likely to make you tired and prevent you from doing productive workouts. In fact, consuming sugar and other nutrients immediately after exercise is a great way to reduce muscle pain and accelerate fitness gains.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

#### Eat within 45 minutes after exercise

❖ What many people don't realize is that the 45-minute window after exercise offers a special opportunity to use nutrition to boost your efforts to get in shape. Consuming the right combination of nutrients during this window of opportunity will build more muscle mass, prevent muscle protein breakdown (which causes muscle soreness), and replenish your muscle energy stores so you have a stronger workout the next day.

Following a workout, the enzymes responsible for building new muscle, repairing damaged muscle and replenishing muscle energy stores are activated. This period of heightened activation only lasts for about 45 minutes. For example, if you consume your nutrition immediately after a workout you will build up to nine percent more muscle mass than if you wait three hours



before eating. Studies have also shown that individuals who don't eat right after their workout consume equal or greater calories later in the day. Finally, the longer you wait after exercise to eat, the larger the percentage of those calories wind up being stored as body fat.

#### Drink plenty of water

❖ Having established that timing is important, the key question is what should post-exercise nutrition consist of? First off, you should drink water. Water is important to help restore your fluid balance. This will accelerate the removal of metabolic byproducts and the transport of important nutrients to the muscle.

#### Post-exercise nutrition should include carbs

❖ During exercise your muscles are depleted of their carbohydrate stores. Since carbohydrate is the primary energy source for muscles, it must be replenished as soon as possible. The



Dr. Robert Portman

If you have a question about nutrition in general or sports nutrition in particular, please e-mail Dr. Robert Portman at [askthetrainer@startfitness.com](mailto:askthetrainer@startfitness.com)

He will answer selected questions in an upcoming column. For more information about Dr. Portman, please refer to [www.pacifichealthlabs.com](http://www.pacifichealthlabs.com).

[askthetrainer@startfitness.com](mailto:askthetrainer@startfitness.com)  
[pacifichealthlabs.com](http://www.pacifichealthlabs.com)

best way to do this is to consume a drink that has carbohydrate in the form of simple sugars. Simple sugars work much better than complex ones when it comes to post-exercise nutrition because they are transported into the muscle cells much more readily, so they replenish muscle energy stores more efficiently. Remember that the metabolic window is only open for about 45 minutes.

#### Recovery nutrition should include protein

❖ Here is an example of where less is more. Many people make the mistake of drinking a protein shake as their recovery beverage. A protein shake consumed immediately after exercise will actually slow muscle recovery. A carbohydrate-protein sports drink is 50% more effective in stimulating protein synthesis than a protein shake. The reason is that in order for the protein to be converted into muscle mass, your body needs to stimulate enzyme pathways involved in the manufacture of muscle protein, and it's carbohydrate that provides this stimulus. The ideal ratio of carbohydrate to protein is four grams of carbohydrate per gram of protein.

When you start your New Year's weight-loss program, there are two important things to keep in mind if you want to get the most out of each and every workout. First, consume your recovery nutrition within 45 minutes after your workout. And second, using a carbohydrate-protein sports drink after exercise will help you reach your fitness and weight goals faster. **GX**