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Health and Wellness Newsletter

Is There a Best Time of Day for Exercise?

Many studies have tried to pinpoint the best time of day to exercise for peak performance and best results. But most of these studies were designed for elite athletes.

For general fitness, exercise can be whenever it's most convenient for you. In fact, the best time of day for exercise is whatever time you can do it consistently. That's because fitness benefits come from working out on a regular basis.

Consider factors like work and home responsibilities, your energy level at various times during the day, and what type of exercise you like best when picking your "prime time" for fitness workouts.

If you're a morning person whose energy fizzles by 3 p.m., start your day with a workout, even if it means waking up a half-hour early. If you need a workout buddy to stay motivated, schedule exercise when it's easiest for both of you. If you like solitude, try off-peak hours at your gym or create your own at-home workout space.

Remember that you can break up daily activity into three 10-minute segments if that's what it takes to get it all in. Park 10 minutes away from work and walk briskly to the building. Do 10 minutes of desk exercises at lunch. Then walk back to your car to go home, and you're done for the day.

Or take a walk during your mid-morning break, your lunch hour and just before or after dinner.

The only caveat is to not exercise too close to bedtime, or you could become too revved up to fall asleep. Allow at least two hours before you go to bed -- more if you need longer to wind down.

-Courtesy of Health Day News

Low-salt, heart-healthy dash diet as effective as drugs for some adults with high blood pressure

A study of more than 400 adults with prehypertension, or stage 1 high blood pressure, found that combining a low-salt diet with the heart-healthy DASH diet substantially lowers systolic blood pressure -- the top number in a blood pressure test -- especially in people with higher baseline systolic readings.

Results of the randomized clinical trial of the dietary combination, conducted by researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, were published in the Nov. 12 issue of Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

"Our results add to the evidence that dietary interventions are as effective as -- or more effective than -- antihypertensive drugs in those at highest risk for high blood pressure, and should be a routine first-line treatment option for such individuals," says Stephen Juraschek, M.D., an adjunct assistant professor at Johns Hopkins and an instructor of medicine at Harvard Medical School.

The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, long promoted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and the American Heart Association, is rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains, along with low-fat or fat-free dairy, fish, poultry, beans, seeds and nuts.

While both low-sodium and DASH diets have long been known to prevent or lower high blood pressure, Juraschek says the new study was designed to examine the effects of combining the two diets in adults with early or modest forms of high blood pressure -- those considered to be at greatest risk for developing more severe forms of hypertension known to increase the likelihood of stroke, kidney disease, heart attacks and heart failure.

For the study, investigators tested and followed 412 adults, including 234 women, ranging in age from 23 to 76 years and with a systolic blood pressure of 120-159 mm Hg and a diastolic blood pressure between 80-95 mm Hg (i.e., prehypertension or stage 1 hypertension). Fifty-seven percent of the participants were African-American.

At the start of the study, none of the participants was taking antihypertensive drugs or insulin, none had a prior diagnosis of or current heart disease, renal insufficiency, poorly controlled cholesterol levels or diabetes.

Investigators put all participants on the DASH diet or a control diet for 12 weeks. The control diet was similar to that of a normal American diet based on the average macronutrient and micronutrient profile of the U.S. population.

All participants were also fed 50 (low), 100 (medium) or 150 (high) mmol/day of sodium in random order over four-week periods. Fifty mmol/day is equivalent to 1,150 mg of sodium. A teaspoon of salt is equal to 2,400 mg of sodium. A diet that includes 100 mmol/day of salt is equivalent to 2,300 mg of sodium -- or nearly a teaspoon of salt. This is the maximum level of sodium intake recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and is thought to reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke.

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Low Sodium Diet Continued…

At the time of the study, according to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, Americans consumed about 150 mmol/day of sodium, which is considered by the FDA to be harmful and may increase a person's risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.

Participants were sorted into four groups based on their baseline systolic blood pressure: 120-129, 130-139, 140-149 and 150 or greater baseline systolic blood pressure.

After four weeks, the investigators found that the group with 150 or greater baseline systolic blood pressure on just the DASH diet had an average of 11 mm Hg reduction in systolic blood pressure compared to a 4 mm Hg reduction in those solely on the DASH diet, but whose baseline systolic pressures were less than 130.

When the researchers combined the DASH diet with the low-sodium diet and compared participants' blood pressures to those on the high-sodium control diet, they found that the group with less than 130 systolic blood pressure at baseline had a 5 mm Hg reduction in systolic blood pressure; the group with 130-139 mm Hg baseline systolic blood pressure had a 7 mm Hg reduction; and the group with baseline systolic blood pressure between 140-149 had a 10 mm Hg reduction.

Most surprisingly, say the researchers, a participant who had a baseline systolic blood pressure of 150 or greater and was consuming the combination low-sodium/DASH diet had an average reduction of 21 mm Hg in systolic blood pressure compared to the high-sodium control diet.

"This is outstanding, it's huge," says Juraschek, because it suggests that those at highest risk for serious hypertension achieve the greatest benefit from the combination diet.

To put the potential impact of the findings into context, Juraschek says, the FDA requires any new antihypertensive agent submitted for approval to lower systolic blood pressure by 3-4 mm Hg. Most established medications on the market, such as ACE inhibitors, beta-blockers, or calcium channel blockers, on average reduce systolic blood pressure by 10-15 mm Hg.

"What we're observing from the combined dietary intervention is a reduction in systolic blood pressure as high as, if not greater than, that achieved with prescription drugs," says senior study author Lawrence Appel, M.D., M.P.H., professor of medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. "It's an important message to patients that they can get a lot of mileage out of adhering to a healthy and low-sodium diet."

The researchers caution that the study did not address effects in people with systolic blood pressure of 160 or greater or in persons with prior cardiovascular disease or medication treated diabetes. Further studies with larger sample sizes are needed to investigate the impact of the low-sodium/DASH diet on these populations.

-Courtesy of www.Science Daily.com

Test your protein knowledge

1. Men need more protein than women?

True

False

2. How many of your calories should come from protein?

A) 5%-10%

B) 10%-35%

C) 35%-50%

D) 50%-65%

3. Athletes need more protein than couch potatoes?

True

False

4. Which has more protein?

A) 1 cup whole milk

B) 1 cup vegetarian baked beans

C) 3 ounces beef

D) 1 large egg

5. Why do we need protein?

A) For energy

B) To build cells

C) To repair bones and muscles

D) All of the above

6. A high protein diet can help you lose weight?

True

False

7. Too much protein can be unhealthy?

True

False

8. A complete protein is also known as?

A) A carbohydrate protein

B) A high quality protein

C) A special protein

9. Women shouldn't have soy protein

True

False

10. Our bodies are good at storing protein to use later?

True

False

11. You can help build muscle by eating protein right after a workout.

True

False

12. Whey protein is high in fat?

True

False

13. Which of these are in the USDA's MyPlate protein food group?

A) Seeds

B) Nuts

C) Beans and peas

D) All of the above

14. Most Americans don't eat enough protein?
True
False

15. You can find protein in which of the following?
A) Sunflower Seeds
B) Walnuts
C) Chickpeas
D) All of the above

16) Which could mean you're not getting enough protein?
A) Weight loss
B) Muscle Fatigue
C) Loss in muscle strength
D) All of the above

17) A high quality protein diet can lower your risk of heart disease?
True
False

Protein Quiz Answers

1. **True.** How much protein you need depends on your sex, age, how much you weigh, how active you are, and other things. But yes, guys usually need more protein than women. An average man needs about 56 grams of protein a day. Women need 46 grams.

A typical day with about 50 grams of protein could include: Chicken (3 ounces), two large eggs, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, and 8 ounces of yogurt.

2. **B) 10%-35%** If you're like most Americans, you get all the protein you need. You should usually get about 10% to 35% of your calories from protein every day.

3. **True.** How active you are affects how much protein your body needs. Athletes may need slightly more protein than non-athletes. They need it to repair and rebuild muscles after all that work.

4. **C) 3 ounces beef.** All of the options are good sources of protein, but beef and other meats are really protein-packed. Meat is also high in saturated fat, which can lead to high cholesterol and heart disease. If you choose red meats for protein, stick with the leanest cuts and be smart with portion sizes. To reduce your risk of cancer, the American Institute of Cancer Research recommends limiting red meat to 18 ounces a week and skipping processed meats like bacon, sausage, and lunchmeat.

5. **D) All of the above.** Protein is an important part of every cell in your body. It has many jobs including giving you energy, repairing your bones and muscles, building cells, and helping with your immune system.

6. **True.** Some studies show that replacing protein for carbs may help you lose weight. High-protein foods move more slowly through your digestive system. That helps you feel full longer after you eat. And your body burns more calories digesting protein than digesting carbs. Protein also can help you avoid hunger pangs by keeping your blood sugar levels steady.

But don't rush out and eat steak all day. Expert say we still don't know the long-term effects of a high-protein, low-carb diet.

Quiz Answers Continued…

7. **True.** Usually, it's not a big deal to eat more protein than you need. But eating more protein means more calories, which can lead to weight gain. And if the protein is from meat or other animal sources, it might be high in saturated fat, which can lead to high cholesterol and heart disease. Too much protein can also cause problems if you have medical conditions, such as kidney disease or diabetes.

Soy comes from soybeans. You can find it in soy milk, tempeh, edamame, and tofu. Whole soy gives you all the essential amino acids, just like protein from animal sources. It is also used instead of meat in some vegetarian dishes.

8. **B) High Quality Protein.** Complete, or high-quality proteins, are packed with specific amino acids. Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins. There are about 20 different ones. Your body needs them all but can only make some. The rest have to come from your diet. Those are known as "essential" amino acids. Complete proteins, like eggs, cheese, meat, soy, and quinoa, have all nine essential amino acids

"Incomplete" protein sources are low in one or more essential amino acids. But you can still get all the amino acids you need even by eating a variety of incomplete protein sources.

9. **False.** Some women worry about plant-made estrogens found in soy. The American Cancer Society says there are no known dangers to eating soy. Eating soy may even lower the risk of breast cancer. Experts say soy protein is a good low-fat option instead of high-fat, animal-based proteins like red meat.

10. **False**. Our bodies don't store proteins the way they store carbs and fats. That's why you need a steady supply of protein every day.

11. **True.** Many studies show that having high-protein foods or drinks soon after exercise helps build and restore muscle. But protein is only part of the story. The other key nutrient to strengthen muscles is carbohydrates.

12. **False.** One reason people like whey protein is because it's low in fat. Whey has proteins that are easy to digest. Some studies show that whey protein may also be good for your immune system.

13. **D) All of the above.** The USDA's MyPlate program includes as protein all foods from meat, poultry, seafood, beans and peas, eggs, processed soy products, nuts, and seeds. Beans and peas are also part of the vegetable group.

14. **False.** Most Americans get all the protein they need from their diet. In fact, most of us get more than enough. Even vegetarians can get plenty of protein by eating a variety of plant-based proteins. Soy and quinoa are particularly good sources because they have all the amino acids, the building blocks of protein, that you need. Older adults need to make sure they get enough protein, because it can be easy to lose muscle as we get older.

15 **D) All of the above.** Protein comes in all kinds of interesting foods. You can find it in meat, of course. But you can also get protein from nuts and seeds, beans and peas, and eggs.

16. **D) All of the above**. Most people don't need to worry about eating enough protein. But strict vegetarians, vegans, and older people should know the signs of too little protein. These include recent weight loss, tired muscles, and a drop in your muscle strength.

17. **True**. Most Americans get about 12% to 18% of their calories from protein. To be healthier, eat more fish, chicken, beans, and less red meat. Also, swap your refined carbs for these healthier proteins. That means more protein instead of foods like white bread and white rice.

- Courtesy of WebMD

Lower Triglycerides: Your Choices Affect Results

When Triglycerides Inch Up: Maybe you've put on a few extra pounds. Now your yearly blood work comes back showing high triglycerides. These fats are an important source of energy in your body, but at high levels they can hurt your heart. Like cholesterol, triglyceride troubles can lead to clogged arteries and possibly to a heart attack or stroke. Luckily, there are many ways to lower your triglycerides.

Why Triglycerides Matter: High triglycerides can be part of an unhealthy condition called metabolic syndrome. Other parts of this illness can include:

Low HDL "good" cholesterol
High blood pressure
Belly fat
High blood sugar

Metabolic syndrome greatly increases your chances of developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

✓ **Look at How You Eat**

That creamy latte, grilled cheese sandwich, or scoop of ice cream before bed can all lead to high triglycerides. If you often eat more calories than you burn - like many of us do - your triglycerides may start to inch up. The worst offenders are sugary foods and foods high in saturated fat, like cheese, whole milk, and red meat.

✓ **Say No to Sugar**

If you have high triglycerides, get your sweet tooth in check. Simple sugars, especially fructose (a sugar often found in fruit), raise triglycerides. Watch out for foods made with added sugar, including soda, baked goodies, candy, most breakfast cereals, flavored yogurt, and ice cream.

✓ **Uncover Hidden Sugar**

Learn to spot added sugars on food labels. Words to look for include brown sugar, corn syrup, words ending in "ose" (dextrose, fructose, glucose, lactose, maltose, sucrose), fruit juice concentrates, cane syrup, cane sugar, honey, malt sugar, molasses, and raw sugar.

✓ **Focus on Fiber**

Swap out foods made with refined white flour, and bring on the whole grains. You'll eat more fiber, which helps lower your triglycerides. For breakfast, have a bowl of steel-cut oats with berries instead of a bagel or sweet cereal. At lunchtime, try a salad loaded with veggies and garbanzo beans. Choose brown rice or quinoa at dinner instead of potatoes or pasta.

✓ **Eat the Right Fat**

A little fat is good for you, when it's the healthy kind. Choose foods that naturally contain mono- and polyunsaturated fats: avocados, walnuts, chicken without the skin, canola oil, and olive oil. Avoid trans fats, which are found in many processed foods, French fries, crackers, cakes, chips, and stick margarine. Don't eat much saturated fat, found in red meat, ice cream, cheese, and buttery baked goods.

✓ Choose Fish Instead of Red Meat

The same omega-3 fats that are good for your heart can help lower your triglycerides, too. Next time you eat out, get the fish instead of a burger or steak. Eat fish at least twice a week. Salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, albacore tuna, and sardines are all high in omega-3s.

✓ Eat Your Nuts and Greens

Other good sources of omega-3s:

Walnuts
Flaxseeds
Spinach
Kale
Brussels sprouts
Salad greens
Beans

✓ Do You Need an Omega-3 Supplement?

Ask your doctor. Capsules can give you a concentrated amount of omega-3s, but not everyone needs them. You may be able to lower triglycerides by making healthier choices in your life. And high doses of omega-3s can cause bleeding in some people. If your doctor says it's OK, look for capsules with EPA and DHA, two powerful types of omega-3.

✓ Cut Back on Alcohol

Do you unwind with wine, beer, or a cocktail? Switch to sparkling water with a squeeze of lime juice. Or try a tangy herbal iced-tea blend that tastes great without added sugar. Excess drinking is one cause of high triglycerides. That means more than one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men. For some people, even small amounts of alcohol can raise triglycerides.

✓ Skip the Sweet Drinks

One of the easiest things you can do to lower your triglycerides is to cut out sweetened drinks. Sodas and other sugary drinks are packed with fructose, a known offender when it comes to boosting triglycerides. Drink no more than 36 ounces of sweet sippers per week -- that means three 12-ounce cans of soda.

✓ Lose Weight

Extra weight, particularly around your waist, raises triglycerides. One of the biggest things you can do to bring your levels down is to take it off. It doesn't have to be dramatic, either.

✓ Get Moving

If you're carrying around a few extra pounds, starting regular workouts can get you in shape and lower your triglycerides at the same time. Aim for 30 minutes of exercise five days a week, and be sure to break a sweat and get your heart pumping. You can cut your triglycerides by 20% to 30%. If you're new to exercise, try a dance class, go for a swim, or take a brisk walk each day.

-Courtesy of WebMD