

Nutrient Timing:

Knowing when to eat is just as important as what you eat.

When your performance goal is to gain lean muscle, you need to keep several factors in mind. First, total caloric needs should be determined based on your BMR. Second, if you are not taking in enough calories to meet the demands of your daily training, then your body is forced to sacrifice lean muscle tissue for energy. Third, the quality of the food is just as important as the quantity of food. Last, when you eat is just as important as what you eat. Follow the 4 simple rules listed below and you will be well on your way to reaching your performance goals.

RULE #1. Breakfast was given its name because you are "breaking the fast" from the last 8 or so hours you have been sleeping. This is the reason it's often said that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Your body tries to do all it can to conserve your hard-earned lean body mass (the first to go) when you're essentially in a starvation mode, which is what can happen during sleep. Subsequently, eating that first meal is crucial in terms of attaining your health and performance goals.

RULE #2. As a reminder, it isn't wise to leave too long of a gap between feedings either. Otherwise, you'll essentially send your body into a muscle eating "catabolic state." Now of course, this doesn't mean you should force feed your body until you reach gluttony with the intention of preserving lean body mass. Instead, smaller more frequent meals (eat once every 3-4 hours) provide more nutrients to the body more often by enhancing the digestion and absorption of nutrients. Meal planning and frequency, like breakfast, is crucial.

RULE #3. In terms of post-workout recovery, there is an approximate 30-45 minute "window of opportunity" immediately following a workout or practice in which your body will store more energy and nutrients than it can under normal circumstances. During this brief window, your muscles can be "super loaded" up to three times more than its normal storage capacity with essential nutrients. Refueling the body with the proper amounts of nutrients after exercise allows for the greatest degree of speed, strength and power development, resulting in a greater training effect and enhanced performance. If you fail to do so, you limit your ability to recover fully leading into your next training, which can spell disaster. So as the saying goes, "If you snooze, you lose!" Eat on time!

RULE #4. Don't forget to drink your water. Be sure and drink at least 16-32 oz of water immediately after exercise. Water flushes out metabolic waste products from exercise and is essential in maintaining the bodies cooling system. Why you ask? Exercise increases body temperature. Your body tries to cool itself by moving the extra heat to the skin via the blood. The higher your core temperature rises, the more blood is used for cooling, and less is available for muscles. So, the cooler you stay during exercise, short of being cold, the better your muscle function. A good measure to know if you're hydrated or not is to take a peek when you use the restroom. If you urine color is clear to pale yellow your hydrated. If its dark yellow and/or has a strong odor, chances are you need to get some water in the body, quickly!