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Energy Now

If you find yourself out of energy, especially before an intense workout, you need sugar. I know that seems to fly in the face of everything you've heard about the evils of carbohydrates, but there's no question that sugar fuels exercise, especially intense exercise. What do I mean by intense? I mean lifting weights, the Interval Training Workout I always talk about, or anything like a spinning class or Tae Bo workout. There's warm-up, but then it's "Get off it, Get after it!" time.

Here's the trick: in order to make sure you have the juice to workout but not gain weight, you need a precise amount of carbohydrates for each minute you're going to workout. Let me be clear that this is my best interpretation of how we use energy during exercise—there's no precise research study to back it up. But my opinion is that we need about four calories per minute if we feel our tank is empty when we start.

There are four calories in a gram of carbohydrate so that means one gram of carbohydrate per minute of exercise: for 15 minutes you need 15 grams, and so on. In order to make sure it's available for exercise, you should take it about 20 minutes before you begin. A sports drink is perfect, but there are other options. You don't want a complex food such as bread, potatoes, or pasta; you don't want your blood or energy diverted to your digestive system. You want something that's broken down quickly, and the sugars in sports drinks work the best. The trick is just enough but no more, so stick to one gram per minute. The idea is that you want to have the juice while you exercise and then switch to burning fat the rest of the time.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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