

## **5 Nutritional Tips for Top Performance**

We're well and truly into the summer now and many of us are enjoying a well-earned break. It's a perfect time to start thinking about our eating habits as it's often easier to do this when the sun is shining and we're more likely to want to eat well. An added benefit is that by taking stock, making changes, and following a healthier lifestyle, we'll be better prepared to deal with the usual stresses and workload once they start to build up again.

I asked my friend and colleague, Sarah Queen, a first-rate nutritionist, to share some of her tips for great health. Are you ready to take up her challenge?

### **5 Nutritional Tips for Top Performance, by Sarah Queen BSc Hons, Nutritionist**

Before you continue reading, I'd like you to take a couple of minutes and write down everything that you had to eat and drink yesterday and then compare this with the advice below.

#### **1. Always eat 3 meals a day.**

Eating 3 meals a day helps to provide your body with all the nutrients it requires. Skipping a meal instantly depletes the body of vitamins, minerals and calories whereas eating regularly helps with the movement of the digestive system and therefore helps with conditions such as IBS, bloating, constipation and diarrhoea; eating your 3 meals helps maintain energy levels throughout the day; and eating regular meals helps prevent over-eating of high fat, high sugar foods which are associated with the rise in obesity, heart disease, diabetes, tooth decay and certain cancers.

#### **2. Eat starchy, preferably wholegrain, foods with every meal.**

These are foods such as low in sugar breakfast cereals, wholemeal breads, brown rice, wholemeal pastas, potatoes and couscous.

These help you feel fuller for longer so that you are not tempted to snack on sweets, biscuits, crisps etc.; the wholegrain varieties contain important vitamins and minerals required for energy regulation; and they help maintain a steady release of energy which helps with concentration levels, improved productivity and help prevent excessive mood swings associated with blood sugar levels rising and falling throughout the day.

### **3. Eat your 5 a day.**

Eating at least 5 portions of different fruit and vegetables daily will provide your body with vitamins, minerals and fibre which help your body cope with stress and illnesses. These fruits and vegetables can be fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juiced (although a fruit juice will only count towards 1 portion no matter how much you consume). Potatoes do not count as they are a carbohydrate food.

### **4. Omega 3.**

Omega 3 is an essential fatty acid, which means your body cannot make it and needs to be consumed in your diet. Omega 3 has been shown to help lower the risk of fatal heart attacks and strokes by preventing the blood clotting; it helps maintain good cholesterol levels; it has been shown to alleviate migraines and mild to moderate depression; it helps with concentration levels particularly in children and gives relief from joint pain. As a nation we are still not eating enough.

Omega 3 is found in oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna, sardines, mackerel and trout. For vegetarians or those with a fish allergy, flaxseed/linseed oil also provide a good source. Aim to eat oily fish at least once a week and take an Omega 3 supplement.

### **5. Watch your caffeine intake.**

You should be aiming to drink about 2 litres of water a day. Tea and coffee do count towards this, however, ideally most of your water should be plain or fruit and herbal teas.

Too much caffeine will affect your energy levels which will affect productivity, increase stress and lead to poor eating habits i.e. you become dependent upon caffeine and sugar for your energy needs and consequently skip meals and deprive yourself of nutrients and proper calories. Unfortunately, this is a cycle that many people become trapped in and can have short term and long term consequences for their health.

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