

# “Ask Justine” – Nutrition & Fitness Q&A



JUSTINE MONAHAN

*Ladies Workout Express Owner*

Hi Readers!

I am the owner of Ladies Workout Express in Robbinsville, and I have been given the opportunity to have a monthly column answering readers' questions about nutrition and fitness. Enjoy the column and send in your questions!

Dear Justine,

I have heard that you should eat breakfast, but I am never hungry when I wake up. Is there a certain time I should eat it? What exactly should I eat and why?

- Suzy from Hamilton

Dear Breakfast at Suzy's,

Breakfast is actually the most important meal of the day! When you go to sleep, everything slows down – your breathing, your heart rate, your metabolism... When you don't eat breakfast, your body stays in fasting mode (starvation mode) much longer than it needs to. It will wonder when its' next meal is coming, so it will hold on to everything it can (including fat) until you give it some fuel to burn. You should eat breakfast within 45 minutes of waking to jump-start your metabolism and put some fuel in the fire.

Many studies have shown that breakfast can actually help a person lose weight. Keep this adage in mind – “Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper” and you can't go wrong. Be sure to have protein and fiber in your breakfast. Some examples are oatmeal, high fiber cereal with skim milk, egg whites with a piece of fruit, or a slice of whole grain bread with a little bit of natural peanut butter. As far as not being hungry when you first wake up – eat something anyway! Your body (and your waistline) will thank you. Your body will adjust quickly to your change of eating habits, and soon enough you will wake up actually feeling hungry for breakfast.

Dear Justine,

I am just getting into working out on a regular basis, and I am so confused if I should

eat something before I work out or not? I usually don't eat anything because I think I'll burn more fat that way. Am I right?

-Food Confusion in Robbinsville

Dear Food Confusion,

About 45 minutes to an hour before a workout, you should eat a small snack between 200 and 300 calories. When you eat before a workout, you will keep your energy levels up, your metabolism high, and you will stay in fat burning mode. If you don't eat anything before a workout and have not eaten in several hours, your body will actually stay in starvation mode and it will be reluctant to get rid of fat for fear it may never be fed again. Our bodies will do anything to survive. If it feels it may not get nourishment, it saves all of your fat reserves to possibly use as fuel later in an emergency. By the same token, if you eat too soon before a workout, well, it may revisit you in your mouth while on the treadmill. Not good. Depending on the time of day you're working out, some ideas of what to eat beforehand are a protein bar, a piece of whole grain toast with a little bit of natural peanut or almond butter, a protein shake, oatmeal, high fiber cereal with skim milk or almond milk, or some sliced turkey on a piece of whole grain bread.

Dear Justine,

I admit – I love a glass of wine in the evenings. It helps me to unwind and relax.

However, I have noticed that over the past few months, I've put on about 5 pounds. I should probably cut back on the wine, but it makes me feel so relaxed. Please help!

- Completely Relaxed in Hamilton Sq.

Dear Completely Relaxed,

Although I am happy to hear you are so relaxed, it seems that the fact your pants are a little tighter is causing some stress. More wine to relax from this stress... tighter pants... not a good cycle. First, reevaluate your day and your life to see why you feel you need something to “relax” at the end of the day. Is the job causing you stress? Relationships? Did you have too much caffeine during the day because you didn't get enough sleep and now you need a “downer”? The good news is some of your extra weight may be as a result of bloating. Alcohol dehydrates a person, which causes bloating. Drink lots of water. For the extra few pounds that are left, cut back to 1-2 glasses/week, if that. Empty calories that are not burned off = Extra Fat.

Justine Monahan is the owner of Ladies Workout Express of Robbinsville and is also a Certified Nutrition Counselor through the Institute for Integrative Nutrition. Please forward any questions for this column to the editor at...marykate@rt130.com.◇