



HEALTH

Healthy Eating: The Three-Hour Window

By Gretchen M. Ashton Jan 19, 2016

What's the best way to eat healthy? Break up your day into three-hour segments and plan your food according to what activities you'll be involved in during that window.

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Healthy eating (and diving more) are perennial New Year's resolutions for many of us. For divers, being healthy translates into diving more frequently and for many years to come. And looking great in that wetsuit is nice too. Losing a few pounds is usually part of the goal, but can be the most difficult to accomplish. Following a diet requires planning and measuring food, with consistent follow-through for weeks and months, if not a lifetime. Busy schedules, unexpected events and food temptations can quickly derail even the most dedicated diver. Balancing 'calories in' with 'calories out' is key to weight loss and maintaining good body composition. Divers need enough food to energize them for an active lifestyle, while also preventing excess body fat and diseases associated with obesity, such as cardiovascular illness and diabetes. But don't be discouraged — divers can look ahead through the 'three-hour window,' without counting calories, and eat without feeling deprived to achieve the coveted improvements in body composition and health. Here's how.

Healthy Eating and Diving

Break up the 24-hour day into eight three-hour segments. Most divers will be sleeping during several of these segments. Hydration is necessary after six to nine hours of sleep. Drink at least one full glass of water upon waking and another one after the first cup of coffee or instead of juice. Proper hydration, along with a good breakfast, prepares both the mind and body for the demands of the day. Hydration for diving begins early in the day as well, with recommendations for several glasses of cold water about three hours before diving.

Breakfast needn't be a big meal; it just needs to be the best meal for the next three hours' activity. How much physical activity will the diver perform during the next three hours? Divers going to work will eat according to the job-related physical and mental activity. Divers exercising in the morning will eat to fuel the type of fitness activity. Does the session consist of strength training, aerobic exercise or both? Look ahead through the three-hour window. Sitting at a desk, computer or watching television requires less food than exercising, shopping at the mall, diving or working construction. Remember, while diving is physical activity, it is moderate activity for most and does not require excess calories.

Generally, divers can eat nearly unlimited quantities of chicken, fish, lean meat, non-meat proteins such as tofu, green vegetables and low glycemic fruits. When working out early in the day, small amounts of carbohydrates like oatmeal and brown rice are easy to digest and provide energy for exercise. Within an hour after exercise, at any time of day, divers should eat a balanced meal of protein and vegetables with a small amount of good fats. Divers can help prevent extreme post-dive hunger by eating a balanced meal during the three hours prior to diving. Endurance athletes may need to add additional carbohydrates in the form of whole grains. A small amount of whole grains and fruit early in the day are good fuel for the brain, but must be balanced with protein by mid-morning to keep from crashing by mid-afternoon.

Divers wishing to lose weight and improve body composition should avoid starchy carbohydrates after lunch. Divers that rely on too many carbohydrates, caffeine and sugar throughout the day will find themselves starving and groggy by 3:00 p.m. At this time, the risk of overeating and eating the wrong foods is high. A large dinner typically occurs too late to fuel a workout and can't be fully compensated for with exercise afterward. Divers often feel defeated, sluggish and guilty, which may lead to failure. Eating small meals throughout the day helps maintain energy, stave off hunger, keep blood-sugar levels steady and provide consistent nutritional stores for exercise and daily activities. Choose whole fresh foods and avoid sauces, bad fats, starches and sugars.

Divers may still wish to set a daily guideline for total calories. An easy way to do this is to add a zero to body weight. For example, a diver weighing 185 pounds can use 1,850 calories as a weight-maintenance guideline. Anything above this caloric intake needs to be utilized during physical activity and exercise. Even within this number, food choices should still be lean. As a guideline, depending on the type of protein and vegetable selection, divers can estimate that four ounces of lean protein and two cups of vegetables is between 250 and 400 calories. On active days, where at least four three-hour windows include physical activity, the diver can enjoy as many as five or six of these small meals if hungry. On days with less physical activity and for sedentary lifestyles, divers are prudent to limit daily intake to three or four of these small meals. Looking ahead through the three-hour window can help divers focus on and accomplish their goals of being healthy, shapely and fit for diving in the new year.



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Gretchen brings her passion for diving and fitness together as the founder of ScubaFit® the only fitness for diving certification which is also approved by both diving and fitness agencies. She is an advanced diver, NBF and ISSA Elite Personal Trainer, Specialist in Fitness Therapy and Nutrition, an AAU World Champion Hall-of-Fame athlete, and a mentor for Water Women, Inc. She shares her message with divers by visiting dive clubs, presenting at scuba shows, as a radio guest, as the publisher of FitDiver® Magazine, and with FitDiver® mobile apps. She widely published with more than 125 articles for diving publications and blogs. For more information or to contact Gretchen, visit www.scubafit.com.

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