Food as Fuel

Your body is a complex chemical factory that requires specific compounds to perform at optimum capacity. When participating in physical activity, whether you’re Braxton Miller taking down Michigan or just hitting the treadmill at the gym, proper nutrition before and after exercise is essential for your body get the most out of your workout. Here are some easy to follow guidelines to assist you in fueling your body:

**Before Exercise (2 to 4 hours)**
Eat a small meal or a large snack that will provide you with the energy you need for exercise. This meal should include complex carbohydrates (70-80%), protein (15-20%), and fat (5% or less).

Examples:
- A salad with grilled chicken, vinaigrette dressing and whole wheat roll
- Turkey & cheese or peanut butter & jelly on whole-grain bread
- Grilled salmon with brown rice and broccoli
- Whole grain pasta with feta cheese and grilled veggies

**Before Exercise (1 hour or less)**
Eat a low-fat (and relatively low-protein) snack made up of mostly easily digestible carbohydrates.

Examples:
- Nonfat yogurt
- A low-fat granola bar
- A piece of fruit (e.g., a banana, a handful of berries)
- A handful of pretzels
- Dry cereal
- Energy bar or sports drink (e.g., diluted Gatorade/Powerade)
- Whole-grain breads

**After Exercise (within 2 hours)**
It’s important to consume electrolytes, carbohydrates, and protein within 2 hours post-exercise. They will help to rehydrate the body and refuel and rebuild muscle. A 4:1 carbs to protein ratio is excellent.

Examples:
- An 8oz glass of low-fat chocolate milk
- Hummus with pita chips
- A protein bar (200 to 400 calories, 15 to 20 grams of protein or less per serving)
- A banana or other fruits
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Cereal with milk
- An apple with peanut butter