

THE NUTE (NUTRITION) GURU IMPARTS WISDOM ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF NATURAL, WHOLE-FOODS NUTRITION FOR MIND/BODY WELLNESS.



Hey Nute Guru, I've recently started lifting weights and am learning about the importance of nutrition for my progress. Do you have any quick and easy tips to help me on my way?



I have something easy for you... Bananas! Bananas are a great choice for a pre-workout snack in the morning, or combined with protein, a great way to recover!

One thing people often neglect to think about when planning a muscle-building diet is carbohydrate. As protein is the main building block of muscle tissue, it often takes center stage, but carbs are vital, too. A nutritious way to get more carbs, along with plenty of fiber, vitamins and minerals, is to eat more bananas.

Break Your Fast With Bananas

A banana at breakfast is a good way to set you up for the day. As you fast between dinner and breakfast, your levels of muscle glycogen drop, writes dietitian Matthew Kadey on the MuscleMag website. By eating a banana at breakfast, you help to top up your glycogen levels, putting a stop to muscle breakdown. Glycogen is your body's main source of energy, and having it readily available prevents your body from breaking down proteins in muscle tissue to use for energy.

Bumping Up the Calories

To build muscle, you have to eat more calories than you burn, as the leftover calories are used for the repair and growth of muscle tissue. One large banana contains around 121 calories. Bananas are easy to eat and can also be blended into smoothies and shakes. They also provide more calories than many other fruits such as strawberries, grapefruit or watermelon, making them a better choice for building muscle.

Pick Up on Potassium

While calories from proteins, carbs and fats are usually your first port of call when designing your bulking diet, you shouldn't ignore vitamins and minerals. One such mineral is potassium. A medium banana contains just under 10 percent of your daily recommended allowance of potassium. In terms of building muscle, potassium plays a crucial part in the muscular contraction process. The Linus Pauling Institute notes that low levels of potassium can result in muscular weakness, fatigue and cramps, all of which can slow down your muscle-building progress.

Perfect Post-Workout

Bananas are primarily carbohydrate, containing 31 grams per large fruit. Carbs play a critical role in your post-workout meal, as they replenish glycogen stores and help protein reach your muscles. The Australian Institute of Sport suggests consuming around 1 gram of carbohydrate per kilogram of body weight -- around 0.45 gram per pound -- within 30 minutes of the end of your session and recommends bananas as a good choice. These bananas should be paired with a protein source, such as lean meat, a protein shake or skim milk.