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Nine sure-fire ways to keep the energy flowing

By Amy Lewis

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So you've followed the food pyramid, you eat right and drink lots of fluids. You'll still need extra energy boosts for your weekend hike, bike ride or soccer game.

Since 1981, scientists and dietitians have determined that not all carbohydrates are created equal.

Here are nine foods dietitians recommend for increasing energy. They will elicit a steady supply of energy rather than causing a sizable peak in blood-sugar levels, followed by a rapid, fatigue-causing drop.

1. Barley. Barley has been called the "energy miracle food." Cooked barley offers almost three times the carbs as a potato, but they're the kinds of carbs that help you cash in on the long-term energy gain.

One cup of barley also has about half the recommended daily amount of fiber. The downside of all that fiber is the fill-

ing effect. You may feel more full after eating barley, so you shouldn't eat it and rush out to exercise.

2. Beans. There are so many types of beans that it's easy to work them into your diet without getting bored. Try lima beans, navy beans, pintos, black beans, green, string, kidney or even fava beans.

Beans are not as carbo lush as barley, but they still have their merits. Your body will digest beans much more slowly than grains, so they provide a continuous supply of energy. You can add them to just about any dish; and even after they're cooked, they retain most of their nutrient value.

Beans are loaded with protein, too, so they're helpful in building and maintaining good, strong muscles.

3. Breads and grains. Not only are breads and grains rich in carbohydrates, but they also provide tons of fiber, vitamins and antioxidants. As with barley (another grain), breads will provide you with energy but will probably fill you up,

too. Give yourself time to digest them before you rush off to the games, hit the trail or get on the bike.

Your best bet is rye or wheat. Try a wheat or rye bagel for breakfast, and you should be exercise ready by midmorning.

4. Dried fruit. Not only are you getting the same nutritional value as with regular fruit, but you are less likely to get "filled up" because the water has been removed. Also, once the water is removed from fruit, bacteria is less likely to inhabit the fruit, since most bacteria need water to live.

Dried fruits are a great snack in the middle of the workday for a quick and healthy pick-me-up and can also be carried easily on a hike, bike ride or wherever you're off to. Check out your local health food store for dried apples, pineapples, raisins and just about every other fruit you can think of.

5. Pasta. This one should be no surprise. We've all heard about marathon runners "carbo-loading" with a big pasta dinner the night before a big race. You don't need to overdo it, but pasta is a great source of carbs and energy. From

simple old-fashioned pasta to couscous, pasta is just plain good for you.

Pasta is a filler-upper because of its high water content. Give yourself some time to digest before you head for vigorous activity. The good news is that pasta has the kind of carbohydrates to provide a longer, steady energy supply.

6. Potatoes. While potatoes are available in many varieties, they all have about the same amount of carbohydrates. Potatoes are also a good source of fiber and other vitamins and minerals.

Perhaps the best potato for energy is the sweet potato. And the best part about it is the sweet part. Sweet potatoes have more calories, and more fructose, which is the kind of carbohydrate that produces steady energy. Sweet potatoes and regular potatoes are comparable in carbs and vitamins.

7. Bananas. Since bananas contain less water than other fruits, they are beneficial without having to be dried. The banana's other advantage is its high potassium content. Bananas are a rich source of potassium, a vitamin that is



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