

How many times a day should I eat?

4 times would be great. However, just like drinking when you get thirsty, athletes never want to be hungry and when you are hungry then you should be eating. Your body doesn't wait for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and certainly won't wait for the athlete to be home or in a restaurant to get hungry. When you are hungry it implies that your body needs energy. If it does not have energy it will take from the mass of the body, sometimes this is fat but most of the time - especially around working out - it will take from the muscles first. Therefore, the less hungry we get the more energy and muscles we have.

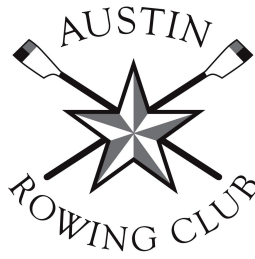
How do I know how many calories to eat?

The straight forward and more data driven answer would be to calculate your TDEE (Total Daily Energy Expenditure) and then add on to how much calories you burn during training. You could take it a step further and either add or subtract calories by small amounts to slowly and safely lose or gain weight. You can weigh food with a food scale, and weigh yourself with a regular body scale multiple times a week. Over a few weeks you can get your average weight and then up the calories or reduce the calories.

The easiest way that would fit into a more normal lifestyle would be to only weigh yourself multiple times a week and remember when and what you ate during the week. If you're losing weight then try eating a bit more unless you're trying to lose. If you're gaining then eat less unless you're trying to gain.

*It is important to note that aerobic sports don't build much muscle so the safe spot is to maintain a healthy weight and maybe slowly gain over a long period of time.

**It is also important to note that everyone's healthy weight is different. Keep in mind, when you step on a scale or you are trying to lose or gain weight, these are only tools to increase athletic performance. Everyone is different when it comes to what a healthy body weight is.



What calories should I eat?

Carbohydrates: Carbohydrates are broken down into glycogen which is further broken down into glucose (this is typical high school stuff). Glucose is - if the body is a car - the gasoline. You need carbs to function and this is double for athletes. Simple carbs like fruits, breads, and honey are good for fast acting energy like before practice. Complex carbs like pasta and potatoes are good after practice. There are no good or bad carbs, just fast or slow carbs. Eat them in abundance, especially around training.

Protein: Protein is separated and broken down into protein components that your body then uses for building and muscle recovery. Protein would be the body, interior, and engine of the car. It's important to maintain a good amount of protein intake throughout the day; however, this should not be the most consumed macronutrient. While it is important for athletes to eat protein (between 1.4 and 1.7 times your body weight in grams for consumption), try not to eat more. If more protein is eating then more room in the stomach is taken up by needless macronutrients.

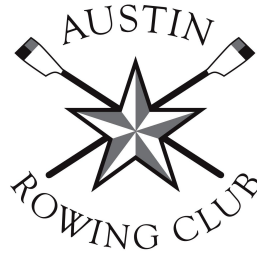
Fats: Fats are the most calorically dense macronutrient (Carbs/Proteins have 4 calories per gram while Fat has 9). Fats would be the oil or coolant of a car that is necessary for the car to work well. While these are ranked third in consumption, it is still important to eat them. They are broken down into smaller lipids which help the body in autoregulation. Eat fats before going to bed or a late dinner and far before practice. Additionally, if you find yourself eating a lot of carbs but still feel hungry then try adding more fats. They are the slowest to digest and will give you a more 'full' feeling.

What type of food is ok pre-workout?

Simple carbs, sugars, and low-fat protein. Breads, bagels, fruit, honey, low-fat carb bars, gatorade, jelly or turkey sandwich, chicken breast. The list is endless.

What food is best after a workout?

Complex carbs, protein, and some fats. Pasta, sweet potatoes, veggies, 88%+ ground beef, egg whites and whole eggs. The list is endless.



How often should I stretch?

If you want to create a habit you can stretch after practice or before bed. Key word: AFTER practice. Try to do 10-15 minutes. Or, if you don't like having a dedicated time to stretch, try stretching whenever you can. Standing in line to get Starbucks? Put a heel out in front of you and bend at the hip stretching the hamstring. Watching Dad cook some grilled cheese? Stand with feet and shoulder width and reach one arm as far as you can go above your head to feel a stretch in your lat (latissimus dorsi).

Training on your own and how much should I do?

Everyone wants to be Rocky Balboa or Hercules from the animated movie but, unfortunately, that's unrealistic. If an athlete trained hard every day they would eventually either get injured, get slower or weaker, or even quit. It is crucial to balance your training and properly recover.

Most, if not all, of the training on your own should be steady state work at about a 140-160 heart rate between 45 minutes and 75 minutes. It is vital to feel out the longer work and make sure that you don't get too tired from the extra work. For college athletes it is regular to train twice a day but they've had years to build their tolerance and they properly balance the workload. Trust the coaches and ask for help to put in extra work