NUTRITION FOR EXAMS

Exam session can be difficult. Proper meals and snacks are often one of the first things that get forgotten with the scramble and stress of studying for tests. However, this should be the time where you pay extra attention to what you are eating. Proper nutrition helps fuel not only your body, but also your brain. Eating well during exams will help you remember information, keep you focused, and will ultimately help you do better on your exams.

Top Tips for Exam Season

1. **HYDRATION** will effect concentration, focus and memory. Aim to drink at least 500 mL of water with each meal and aim for 2-3L of fluids over the course of the day.

2. **PLAN YOUR SNACKS** by stock up on foods that can be easily prepared and packed for a day at the library. Avoid boredom eating by planning snacks to compliment meals. Avoid highly processed snacks or junk foods. See below for more details on snacking.

3. **START AND END THE DAY WELL.** Make sure you are eating a good breakfast and evening meal, especially if these are the only main meals you have. Use leftovers wisely – don’t succumb to eating unhealthy take-outs, fast foods or junk foods. Make meals ahead of time and freeze in individual portions (this can be done before exam season starts, or as a relaxing study break!). Stock up on foods to cook quick meals: rotisserie chicken, pasta, eggs, beans and frozen vegetables just to name a few.

4. **USE CAFFEINE WISELY.** Caffeine can help you stay awake and improve concentration, but too much can have the opposite effect on your concentration. Caffeine should be limited to 3mg per kg body mass (i.e. for a 70kg person – 210mgs per day which is 2 small single shots). Stop drinking caffeine within 5 hours of the time you want to sleep.

Nutrient Dense Foods

- High intake of antioxidant rich fruits and vegetables will help reduce the effect of stress on the immune system and may help reduce illness. Nutrient dense foods include blueberries, raspberries, cranberries, broccoli, spinach, onion and dark chocolate.
- Iron and B vitamins are especially important to maintain the physical and mental energy necessary to study well. Iron-containing foods include red meat, cereals and spinach. B vitamin rich foods include whole-grains, eggs and nuts.
- High intake of fish/fish oils, nuts and eggs will also help support your immune system.

Get enough sleep!

Aim for at least 7 hours of sleep each night. If you are struggling with sleep, chamomile tea or warm milk before bed may help.

Avoid using blue light emitting electronics within 30 minutes of going to sleep.

Remember to stop drinking caffeine as outlined above.
Snacking
Eating every 2-3 hours when you are training is ideal, but when you are studying and not active you need to think carefully about the snacks you choose. Snacks that are rich in protein will help to keep you full. You may or may not need the extra calories from carbohydrates and fats in your snack during exam time. As always, limit highly processed, high sugar and high fat snack foods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you tend to gain unwanted body weight during exams</th>
<th>If you tend to lose body weight unintentionally during exams</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Breakfast:</strong> focus on protein, fruits and a small portion of starchy carbohydrate on days when you are not training in the morning e.g. vegetable omelette and fruit</td>
<td><strong>Breakfast:</strong> have a large breakfast which contains protein, carbohydrates and fats e.g. scrambled egg, multigrain bread and a smoothie</td>
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<td><strong>Snacking:</strong> focus on fruits, vegetables and protein. Limit high carbohydrate and sugary foods as snacks.</td>
<td><strong>Snacking:</strong> focus on foods which contain carbohydrates and proteins as snacks. Naturally fat rich foods (nut butters, avocado) also provide additional calories</td>
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<td><strong>Evening meal:</strong> adjust your carbohydrate portion down if you are not training. A good guideline is ¼ of your plate or 1 fist of starchy carbohydrates. Top up your plate with vegetables.</td>
<td><strong>Evening meal:</strong> keep your starchy carbohydrate intake high – a similar size to what you would eat in training. A good guideline is ½ - ¾ of your plate or 2-3 fists of starchy carbohydrates (rice, pasta etc.)</td>
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<td><strong>Meal preparation:</strong> if you find you overeat through boredom, make sure you have healthy snacks and pre made portioned dinners on hand</td>
<td><strong>Meal preparation:</strong> make sure you have high energy snacks and pre made dinners ready to heat up and eat quickly</td>
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<td><strong>Pre bed eating:</strong> avoid consuming anything other than plain yogurt or milk before bed. See lower energy snacks below if you are hungry</td>
<td><strong>Pre bed eating:</strong> have a high fibre, protein rich snack before bed (e.g. cereal + milk, toast + eggs, yogurt + granola, cottage cheese and crackers)</td>
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**High energy snacks**
- Oatcakes or crackers and nut butter
- Peanut butter sandwiches
- Greek yogurt with nuts/granola and honey
- Fruit smoothie
- Avocado on toast
- Humus or guacamole with crackers
- Sliced banana + nut butter
- 1 cup of muesli/granola with nuts & milk
- Sushi rolls
- Good quality granola bar e.g. elevate me, kasha, nature valley
- Baked pretzels
- Dried fruit
- Bagels
- Rice pudding

**Lower energy snacks**
- Vegetable smoothie
- Boiled eggs
- Veggie Sticks
- Glass of milk
- Sliced deli meat or jerky
- Edamame or sashimi
- Tinned tuna
- Rice crackers/rice cakes
- Pickles
- Olives
- Salted homemade air popped popcorn (no cheese or sweet)
- Prosciutto wrapped melon
- Apple slices
- Bananas
- Fruit cups

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