



6 Secrets to Firing Up Your Metabolism

By: *Healthy SELF, SELF Magazine*

Not happy with the metabolism you've got? These strategies-for mealtime, gym time, downtime and bedtime-will help you burn more calories all day long.

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1. Pick Protein

"Protein is the building block of muscle," says Roberta Anding, R.D., a spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association). "The more lean muscle you have, the more calories you expend."

Bump Up Your Burn: Your muscles can use only 30 grams of protein at any time, a study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* notes. Any more than that gets stored as fat. Aim for a minimum of 46 g of protein per day. A sample menu:

Breakfast: 6 ounces lowfat yogurt with 1/2 cup berries and a medium skim latte

Lunch: Spinach salad with 2 oz chicken and 1/3 cup black beans, served with pita with 2 tbsp hummus

Dinner: Asian stir-fry with 1/3 cup each tofu, snow peas, red bell peppers, bok choy, bean sprouts and 3/4 cup brown rice, sprinkled with 2 tbsp slivered almonds

2. Soothe Your Stress

It's impossible to live in a worry-free bubble, but constant anxiety can cause your adrenal gland to pump out too much cortisol. High levels of the stress hormone change how your metabolism stores fat, sending flab to the belly, where it affects vital organs (and your bikini confidence).

Bump Up Your Burn: Yoga can reduce stress by signaling to your brain to lower cortisol levels, according to a review in *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. There's evidence that meditation and tai chi may have the same effect. To find your version of Zen-ercise, sign up for group-buying sites to get deals on classes. Pick your fave and make it a regular habit.

3. Be a Cardio Queen

Just one 45-minute high-intensity workout can help increase your RMR by 37 percent for up to 14 hours post-exercise, a study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* indicates.

Bump Up Your Burn: "A vigorous workout raises your internal temperature, creates some inflammation and depletes your energy stores," says David C. Nieman, Ph.D., professor at Appalachian State University. "Afterward, it takes extra energy for your body to bounce back to its normal resting state." Intervals are great for upping calorie burn during your workout, but to keep metabolism high hours after you've left the gym, you need to exercise once or twice a week for 45 minutes at a steady level that makes it difficult to converse (about a 7 on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the hardest you could go). Relax after the tough workout, and revel as you burn nearly 200 more calories from your couch.

4. Sculpt Lean Muscle

"As you age, you start to lose some muscle mass," says GERALYN COOPERSMITH, an exercise physiologist and national director of the Equinox Fitness Training Institute. "Lifting weights helps you maintain and build on what you have, so your metabolism stays high."

Bump Up Your Burn: Two or three times a week, finish your calorie-zapping cardio sessions with 15 to 30 minutes of strength training. "Perform 12 to 20 reps of moves that engage as many muscles as possible, such as squats, planks, lunges and push-ups," Coopersmith says. "You'll get higher muscle activation and calorie burning with this strategy." Devise your own plan with the self Workout Builder at Workouts.Self.com.

5. Clock Your Snooze

As few as two sleepless nights can mess with your metabolism-increasing levels of the hormone ghrelin, which stimulates hunger, and decreasing levels of the hormone leptin, which tells you to stop munching—a study in *Endocrine Development* shows. Research also notes that sleep debt causes insulin resistance, interfering with how your metabolism processes fat and leading to weight gain.

Bump Up Your Burn: Seven to eight hours of sleep per night is considered the sweet spot, says Richard D. Simon Jr., M.D., of Providence St. Mary Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington. The Up by Jawbone (\$99) can help you track your zzz's. The bracelet uses motion sensors to monitor movement, calculating your calorie burn and how well you sleep.

6. Fill Up on Plants

The fiber in produce helps stabilize blood sugar levels, keeping your metabolism humming. Plus, the antioxidants in fruit and vegetables help your body get rid of free radicals, says Kantha Shelke, Ph.D., a spokeswoman for the Institute of Food Technologists. Free radicals can harm healthy cells—cells your body needs to keep your metabolism going strong. Unwanted pounds and health complications can result.

Bump Up Your Burn: Aim for 25 g to 30 g of fiber per day. To get the most benefit for your calories, load up your plate with these 10 foods, which, in addition to having fiber, Norwegian researchers have found are high scorers when it comes to antioxidant capacity: walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds, dark chocolate, blackberries, cranberries, boiled artichokes, dried apricots, curly kale and red cabbage.