



# Performance Food



*Certain foods can actually help you get the things you want: a good night's sleep, a big raise, a long-awaited pregnancy, and more. Read on to find out what to eat to gear up for life's little (and big) challenges.*

## Battling the sniffles

**Best to eat:** Warm fluids, plus garlic

**Why:** Liquids help by thinning mucus, easing a dry cough, and fending off dehydration due to fever. Garlic has disease-fighting compounds that can give your body a little boost.

**Try:** A soup that has garlic or onions. Either can easily be added to chicken or vegetable broth.

## Dreaming of sleep

**Best to eat:** Whole grains with protein

**Why:** If you toss and turn in bed, the right snack can help you unwind. Whole grains have carbohydrates that will increase the serotonin in your brain. Eating a meal with carbs, along with proteins that have the amino acid tryptophan, can help insomnia.

**Try:** A half-cup of whole-grain cereal with skim milk about an hour and a half before sleep. Other picks: hummus on a whole-wheat pita or a rice cake topped with tomato and a slice of turkey breast.

## Before a workout

**Best to eat:** Light snack with carbs and water

**Why:** A small bite a half-hour to an hour before a workout will give you staying power but won't weigh you down. It takes the edge off hunger and gives your body some calories.

**Try:** Yogurt and a few whole-grain crackers if you have an hour or more before the workout; half a banana or 6 ounces of orange juice if you have less time, because they turn into energy (glucose) faster.

## Asking for a raise

**Best to eat:** Lean protein and whole grains, plus

caffeine

**Why:** You want to be alert and upbeat when you're hitting up the boss. Protein foods have an amino acid, tyrosine, that helps increase mental alertness, and whole grains have been shown to improve energy. Also, caffeine improves attention and short-term memory. The effect is strongest if you down one to two 8-ounce cups at least 20 minutes (but no more than an hour) before your sit-down with the boss.

**Try:** An egg-white and spinach omelet, or a whole-wheat bagel with low-fat cream cheese and java.

## Hitting the road

**Best to eat:** A low-calorie meal that travels well

**Why:** Since you'll probably be sitting for hours in a car or plane, you don't need a lot of calories. You may not be able to keep foods fresh either, so nonperishable, portable foods are also a smart bet. And a healthy snack will keep you away from fat-filled fast foods.

**Try:** A prepackaged green salad with chicken at the airport, or soup and a whole-wheat roll. For a short flight, shoot for a protein bar with about 15 grams of protein. For a long road trip, try trail mix made with whole-grain cereal, nuts, and dried fruit.

## Speaking to a crowd

**Best to eat:** A high-protein, low-fat meal

**Why:** It's the perfect combo to help concentration and keep those butterflies in check. Amino acids from the protein will not only help you with the ability to learn and recall information, but they'll also enhance your ability to concentrate and stay alert. Combine chicken, fish, beef, or tofu with some veggies or whole grains, but go easy on the greens, which have fiber that can make you feel gassy or bloated.

**Try:** A lightly dressed tuna salad with whole-wheat bread or grilled chicken on a small bed of greens.

Source:

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