Working Out Before Eating Breakfast Could Help Stave Off Extra Pounds

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When is the best time of the day to exercise if your goal is to prevent weight gain? In 2010, a study in Belgium suggested that working out before breaking your fast in the morning could be your best bet. Reporters at The New York Times recently examined the research, and found that "fasting workouts" may actually help trick your body into burning more fat.

For the study, researchers fed several young, healthy men a diet consisting of 30 percent more calories and 50 percent more fat than they had previously been eating. Some volunteers remained inactive while pigging out. Others began an intense midmorning exercise routine after they ate breakfast. A third group performed the same workout regimen before eating.

Researchers said after six weeks, men in the sedentary group—predictably—gained about six pounds each. The men who exercised before breakfast gained three pounds on average. But the men who worked out in a fasted state gained no weight during the trial.

Scientists said it's key to note that the pre-breakfast exercise regimen didn't induce weight loss in the men. Exercising before eating the first meal of the day simply prevented weight gain.

"The optimal strategy to prevent increases in body weight is obviously to combine a healthy, well-balanced diet with a physically active lifestyle," said Peter Hespel, a professor at the Research Center for Exercise and Health at Leuven's Catholic University in Belgium, and an author of the study.

For a few ideas on how to tackle weight loss from a healthy-eating approach, click here.

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