

Fun Fact of the Week

6 Health & Fitness Tips From Olympic Athletes*

by [Ashley Jankowski](#)

Top health & fitness strategies straight from Olympic athletes themselves

Are you so excited for the 2018 Olympics that you wish you could, like, become an Olympian yourself? We've got your back. Here are the top health and fitness tips used every day by our favorite Olympic athletes.

1. Mornings matter

According to American swimmer Natalie Coughlin, it's time to become a morning person. This 12-time Olympic medalist takes breakfast very seriously and considers it to be a critical foundation for the rest of your day.



Image: Ashley Britton/SheKnows

"If you start your day off with a doughnut, you kind of trash that day," [Coughlin told SheKnows](#). "But if you start on the right foot, with a healthy breakfast, you'll be much more likely to continue making healthy choices the rest of the day."

So, do your future self a favor and pair your morning coffee with a balanced breakfast of good carbs and healthy proteins. Satisfied and energized, you'll be able to fearlessly conquer the midday munchies later.

2. Schedule meals around your workouts

Unlike Kerri Walsh, we can't all fit in a daily beachfront workout. However, we can still steal [her killer meal-prep tips](#). For this Olympic volleyball star, fueling your body before, during and after your workout is essential for optimal performance and recovery.

Walsh suggests eating an hour to an hour-and-a-half before a workout and immediately consuming protein afterward. In between your squats, burpees and power jams, don't forget to pay attention to your body too. Often reaching for sports drinks like Gatorade while competing, Walsh reminds us to monitor and maintain our energy levels while working out to ensure a strong — and safe — finish.

3. Become friends with carbs

In the face of the extreme dieting trends we tend to see today, it may come as a shock that carbohydrates aren't the enemy of serious athletes, but rather an important ally. In fact, professional soccer player and [gold medalist Abby Wambach](#) wouldn't be able to get through warm-ups without them. "Human beings need carbohydrates," Wambach told *SheKnows*. "It's our fuel. It would be like getting into a car with no gas. It's the energy that makes you go."

Wambach warns against low-calorie "quick-fix" diets and instead suggests maintaining a more individualized nutrition plan and experimenting to find the right amount of healthy, complex carbs for your body type and fitness level. Hear that? It's time to end the feud with carbs.

4. Make fitness a family affair

We often forget that Olympians are parents too. So how exactly do they squeeze fitness into their full-time schedule of parenting? A busy mom of two, [Olympic curler Erika Brown](#) suggests integrating health and fitness into family time in any way you can.

Remember: Your decision-making leaves an impression on your children. The earlier you establish healthy habits, the better. So, whether it's running around with the kids in the backyard, volunteering to coach their little league team or simply sitting down for a healthy dinner, you are exemplifying the importance of leading active lifestyles — and that deserves a medal in itself.

5. De-stress & decompress

After a lifetime spent on balance beams, [gymnast Nastia Liukin](#) knows a thing or two about stability. For this five-time Olympic medalist, fitness is all about seeking balance.

"Make sure you are getting plenty of sleep, taking time to exercise and taking time to do the little things that make you happy, whether it's getting a fun manicure or reading a great book or just taking a bubble bath," Liukin told *SheKnows*.

Feeling stressed out can easily lead to impulsive, unhealthy decision-making. So, go ahead: Treat yo'self with some daily me-time; it's the Olympian-approved safeguard for your health goals.

6. Remember to rest

Our vision of an Olympic athlete often involves an alarm clock ringing at an absurdly early hour of the morning followed by an unimaginably grueling workout framed by some version of the infamous phrase, "no days off."

This myth is busted by [Olympic swimmer Summer Sanders](#), who stresses the importance of recognizing the difference between feeling the *burn* and feeling a *pain*.

"A large percentage of running injuries need rest from running," Sanders, who now runs marathons competitively, told *SheKnows*. "When an injury occurs, runners need to stop and listen to their bodies, force themselves to take a break from their training schedule and take care of themselves."

Even if you're not a runner, give yourself a break. To prevent overworking your body, experiment with cross-training to give your muscles, joints and bones some recovery time. If you're lifting weights several times a week, try yoga. If you often do high-impact workouts, incorporate swimming into your workout regimen. In addition to mixing up your workouts, Sanders is also a huge advocate for getting a solid night's sleep. Permission to get in bed before 9 p.m. granted.

Got all that? Good — you're one step closer to being a gold medalist. Now you've just gotta get yourself to Pyeongchang.