

▶ Nutrition and Hydration



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Nutrition and Hydration

Most forestry tasks use up a lot of energy. In fact, if you've got a very active harvesting job, you can burn through as many kilojoules as you'd need to run a marathon.

Whether you've got a high-energy role, or whether you spend most of your time sitting in the cab, the important thing is to eat enough of the right kind of foods to keep you healthy and raring to go.

The basic building blocks of our diets include carbohydrates, proteins and fats. There are healthy and not so healthy choices available for each of these – the trick is knowing what's the best choice.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates break down as sugar, which our bodies use for energy, but some carbs break down faster than others. What are known as 'simple' carbs, such as those in sugary and processed foods, might give you a quick burst of energy but it won't last long and can leave you in a sugar slump.

About 70% of an active forestry worker's daily food should be from carbs. Ideally they should be what's known as 'complex' or 'slow-release' carbs, which digest more slowly giving lasting energy.

Ideally choose less processed carbs such as:

- ▶ brown rice, wholemeal pasta, porridge and grainy breads
- ▶ fruit and vegetables.

Protein

Our bodies use protein to repair body tissues and build new muscle. Most proteins come from animals – meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dairy – and while these are good, they can be quite high in fat. Vegetable sources – dried beans, lentils, and nuts – are also good sources of protein and are generally lower in fat.

For a steady supply of energy, include a small amount of low-fat protein (lean meat, skinless chicken, fish, low-fat milk products, nuts) in every meal and snack.

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Fats

While choosing lower-fat proteins is a healthier choice, we need some fat so our bodies can absorb certain vitamins and function properly.

But our bodies can store fat in unlimited amounts, so choosing lean meat, low-fat milk, limiting butter and making pies and pastries occasional treats is highly advisable.

Most of us tend to eat mostly animal fat, but good kinds of fats are generally found in oily fish, nuts, and some plant oils. These fats are great for repairing tissue and are thought to be better for heart health.

Fats are digested slowly so they have a lot of staying power. But eat too much and they can also slow you down and make you feel sluggish.

Daily diet

The trick to being fuelled throughout the day is to find the right balance of fats, protein, and carbohydrates, and only eating as many kilojoules as you will burn off. Make sure you eat three good meals – including some low-fat protein with complex carbs – spaced throughout the day, as well as regular snacks.

Hydration

When you work hard you sweat, so you need to replace that fluid to avoid becoming dehydrated. Even mild dehydration will reduce your concentration, so you should sip at least half a litre of fluid an hour – more if it's really hot. Ideally, wear a backpack hydration system or keep a water bottle with you.

Sports drinks are good, and you can make your own by diluting orange juice half-and-half with water and adding a pinch of salt. Stay away from caffeinated drinks because they make you lose more fluid through urine and can be full of unnecessary sugar.