



GUIDE

The Best Dates for Energy Before a Workout

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If you want something small before a workout, dates are easy to overlook. They are sweet, portable, require no preparation, and a few pieces can fit into a pre-workout routine without feeling like a full meal.

But not every date makes the same kind of pre-workout snack.

For someone heading out for a run, a soft [Medjool](#) can be appealing because it is large, tender, and easy to eat. For a cyclist or gym-goer who prefers smaller portions, [Deglet Noor](#) may be easier to manage. The better choice depends less on finding a universally "best" date and more on how much you want to eat, how close you are to training, and whether you prefer a soft or firmer texture.

QUICK ANSWER

Medjool dates are the strongest choice for quick concentrated natural sugar, potassium and magnesium. Eating about 30 minutes before training works well.

Why dates work well before exercise

The main reason dates make sense before a workout is simple: they provide carbohydrates in a compact food.

[Healthline's overview of dates](#) covers the nutritional basics, including the sugar and fiber profile that makes them a portable pre-workout option.

That matters when you want some energy without eating a large snack shortly before training. Dates also travel well. You can keep a few in a gym bag, desk drawer, or running pack without needing refrigeration or preparation.

Their sweetness can be useful before exercise, but it is also the reason portion size matters. A date is small, yet several dates can add up quickly.

For a short, easy workout, you may not need much food beforehand at all. For a longer session, particularly one involving endurance exercise, a carbohydrate-rich snack may be more useful.

The timing matters, too.

Eating a few dates shortly before exercise is different from eating them an hour or two beforehand. The closer you are to your workout, the more important it becomes to keep the snack simple and avoid eating more than you comfortably tolerate.

Medjool vs. Deglet Noor for pre-workout energy

Two varieties appear repeatedly when shoppers look for dates in the United States: Medjool and Deglet Noor.

They can both work before exercise, but they are quite different to eat.

	Medjool	Deglet Noor
Size	Large	Smaller
Texture	Soft and moist	Firmer and more structured
Flavor	Rich, caramel-like sweetness	Lighter, less intense sweetness
Portion control	Easy to underestimate because each date is large	Easier to build a smaller portion
Best fit	People who prefer a substantial, soft bite	People who prefer smaller, firmer pieces

Medjool is the obvious choice if you like a soft, substantial date. One or two can feel like a meaningful snack.

Deglet Noor makes more sense if you want smaller pieces or prefer a less sticky texture.

Neither variety automatically produces a better workout. The useful question is which one fits your appetite and routine. If you want a data-driven comparison of the two, see our [full Medjool vs Deglet Noor guide](#).

How many dates should you eat before a workout?

There isn't a magic number that works for everyone.

A small serving may be enough before a short workout. Someone preparing for a longer endurance session may want more carbohydrate, either from dates alone or alongside another food.

The important point is to avoid turning a small pre-workout snack into an unnecessarily large one.

A practical starting point is **1-3 dates**, then adjust according to the size of the dates, your workout, and how your stomach responds.

Large Medjool dates are very different from small Deglet Noor dates, so counting pieces without considering their size can be misleading.

If you are eating immediately before exercise, starting with a small amount is usually more sensible than eating a large portion for the first time.

When should you eat dates before exercise?

Your timing can change how much you want to eat.

30–60 minutes before

This is the simplest situation. If you have eaten normally during the day and just want something before training, a small portion of dates may be enough. Keep the serving modest and choose a variety you already know you tolerate well.

1–2 hours before

You have more room for a slightly larger snack. Dates can be paired with another food if you need something more substantial. For example, you might combine them with yogurt, oats, or another familiar pre-workout food.

Immediately before training

This is where portion size becomes particularly important. A large handful of dates may sound harmless, but eating a lot of concentrated sweetness immediately before running or intense exercise may not feel comfortable for everyone.

If you are trying dates for the first time, don't make race morning the experiment.

The best dates for different workouts

The right choice depends on the type of training rather than the name of the workout alone.

For running

Soft Medjool dates are convenient if you want a quick, easy-to-chew snack before heading out. For shorter runs, you may only want a small amount. During longer runs, dates can also be useful as part of a broader fueling strategy, although individual tolerance varies.

For strength training

You generally don't need to treat a normal strength session like a long endurance event. A couple of dates can work as a small carbohydrate-containing snack if you arrive at the gym hungry or haven't eaten recently. Medjool works well here if you like a more substantial bite.

For cycling

Cyclists often value foods that are easy to carry. Deglet Noor can be convenient because the smaller pieces make it easier to divide a serving. Medjool is also practical, especially when you want a larger individual portion. For longer rides, what matters most is having a fueling plan that matches the duration and intensity of the ride.

For hiking

Dates have one obvious advantage on a hike: they don't require preparation. A small container or resealable bag can hold enough for a trail snack without taking much space. Medjool is particularly satisfying when you want something sweet and substantial. Deglet Noor is a good alternative if you prefer smaller bites throughout the hike.

What about dates with peanut butter or nuts?

Dates become a different kind of snack when you add fat and protein. A date stuffed with peanut butter or paired with nuts is more substantial than eating dates alone. That can be useful when you want something that keeps you satisfied longer, but it may not be the best choice immediately before intense exercise.

For a snack well before training, the combination can make sense. For something eaten minutes before running, simplicity may be preferable. Again, your own tolerance matters more than finding a perfect recipe.

Fresh vs. dried dates for energy

The dates sold in most U.S. grocery stores are dried or semi-dried rather than fresh. That distinction matters because removing water concentrates the food. For a full breakdown of what "fresh" actually means on a U.S. date label, see our [fresh vs dried dates guide](#).

A fresh date can have a very different texture and water content from the dried dates commonly sold in bags. When comparing products, look at the nutrition label and serving size rather than assuming that every date contains the same amount of carbohydrate.

For shopping purposes, the label is more useful than a generic claim such as "dates are great for energy."

What we look for when comparing dates for workouts

At DatesOracle, we don't treat the cheapest bag as automatically the best value. For an energy-focused purchase, we look at several things:

- Date variety
- Texture
- Serving size
- Price per ounce
- Product size
- Pitted vs. unpitted
- Organic certification when relevant
- Ingredient list
- Retailer availability
- Verified offer price

[Price per ounce](#) is particularly useful here. A \$10 bag is not necessarily cheaper than a \$13 bag if the second package contains substantially more dates. Comparing the package price alone can make two products look closer than they really are.

A practical shopping comparison

If you're buying dates specifically for pre-workout use, the decision can be surprisingly simple.

Choose Medjool if:

- You prefer large, soft dates.
- You want a more substantial snack.
- You normally eat only one or two pieces.
- You like a richer, caramel-like flavor.

Choose Deglet Noor if:

- You prefer smaller dates.
- You want easier portion control.
- You prefer a firmer texture.
- You want something that works well as an everyday snack as well as a pre-workout option.

And don't overlook the package itself. A premium date can be excellent and still represent poor value if you are paying substantially more for a quality difference that doesn't matter to you.

So, which dates should you buy for energy?

For most people, the choice comes down to **portion, texture, timing, and price**, rather than one variety being universally superior.

Medjool is a strong fit if you want a soft, substantial date and prefer eating only a small number of pieces.

Deglet Noor is a practical alternative when you want smaller portions and a firmer bite.

If you're unsure, start with a small serving during a normal training session. See how it feels, then adjust. Your everyday workout is a much better place to learn what works for you than the morning of an important race.

And when you're ready to buy, compare the actual package size and price per ounce rather than judging a product from its sticker price alone.

That is the difference between simply buying dates and choosing the dates that make sense for your routine.

Frequently asked questions

Do dates work as well as commercial energy gels?

They serve a similar purpose but behave differently. Gels are engineered for fast absorption during intense exercise, while dates provide carbohydrates alongside fiber, potassium, and magnesium. For most recreational workouts, dates are a practical alternative. For long endurance events, you may want a fueling plan that includes both.

Can I eat dates during a long run or ride?

Yes, if you have practiced with them. Many endurance athletes carry dates on longer sessions, but individual tolerance varies – especially in heat. Try them on a moderate training day first, not on race day.

Should I drink water when eating dates before exercise?

Yes. Dates are concentrated in sugar and fiber, and pairing them with water helps both comfort and absorption. A few sips alongside the dates is usually enough; you do not need to overdrink.

Find your energy date in 30 seconds

Answer 5 quick questions and get a personalized recommendation based on purpose, texture, sweetness, and budget.

[Start the Energy Date Finder](#)

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