



Recovery is one of the most important aspects of any serious athlete's regimen. When you push your body regularly with training and competition, you need to refuel the muscles so you are ready for the next event or training session. If you neglect post-exercise nutrition, you will run low on energy, and either your training or event performance (or both) will suffer.

It's important to think about nutrition for recovery throughout the training and competitive season. Pay close attention to recovery nutrition during:

- Twice-a-day training
- Tournament play all day or weekend tournaments
- Events where prelims are in the morning and finals later that day
- Day-long meets with time in between events

RECOVERY NUTRITION BASICS

What to eat:

Carbohydrate is the preferred fuel for the muscles both during and after hard exercise. The body uses carbohydrate during intense training and competition. Eat meals and snacks that contain all the macronutrients (carbohydrate, protein and fat) after exercise, but with carbohydrates in the highest percentage. Be sure to keep the fluids flowing. Exercisers commonly lose 1-3 pounds of fluid from sweat per hour. This easily leads to a loss of more than 2% of body weight in fluids. This small amount of fluid loss will diminish both mental and physical capacity. And if muscle cells are not well-hydrated, protein synthesis is slowed, reducing the recovery and growth of muscle tissue. Monitor your hydration status by checking the color of your urine. Drink enough fluid so that your urine is pale yellow. Dark urine indicates dehydration.

When to eat:

Intense exercise can deplete your body's stored carbohydrate (called glycogen). Your muscles are most receptive to replenishing lost glycogen stores within the first 30 minutes to two hours after exercise. Getting carbohydrates into your system within the first hour after exercise will help you refuel your muscles, getting them ready to exercise again within hours. Some athletes don't feel hungry right after heavy exercise. Try some juice that is high in carbohydrates to replenish carbohydrates and lost fluids. When you are hungry, have a meal that is high in carbohydrates and also includes protein and fat.

How much to eat:

Sports nutrition books recommend consuming at least 50-100 grams (200-400 calories) of carbohydrate within two hours after hard exercise. Some research has indicated that consuming protein in addition to carbohydrates immediately following exercise may aid recovery. Choose foods that are higher in carbohydrates along with some protein.

SNACK IDEAS

- 2 cups Cheerios with 1 cup skim milk
- 16 oz. cranberry juice with ½ bagel with 1 TBSP peanut butter
- 1 energy bar with 16 oz. orange juice
- 2 graham crackers with 1 cup fruit yogurt

Other high carbohydrate foods:

| | | |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------|
| • Rice | • Pancakes | • Dried Fruits |
| • Pasta | • Tortillas | • Low fat crackers |
| • Bread | • Milk * | • Juices |
| • Fresh Fruits | • Potatoes | • Lentils * |
| • Yogurt * | • Fig bars | |

Try these tips for an optimal recovery after training and competition:

- Foods and fluids that are high in carbohydrate are best after exercise and competition.
- If appetite is decreased after exercise, try juice. The sugars in juices will give you the carbohydrate you need and the fluid will help you rehydrate.
- If you crave salt, choose a salty food like pretzels, soups, salted crackers or sprinkle a little salt on your post-exercise meal.
- Drink real fruit juices after exercise. Juices are rich in potassium, vitamins and carbohydrates all nutrients that enhance recovery.
- Keep eating carbohydrate-rich foods for several meals after exhaustive endurance exercise.
- Rest is important. Allow your body a rest day (or two) so muscles can store rather than burn carbohydrate.

* also has protein

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>