

Recovery Nutrition

What is recovery nutrition?

Nutrition after training fuels maximal recovery from training and prepares you for the next session by providing the right types and amounts of nutrients in a set time frame.

There are 5 main components: carbohydrates, protein, antioxidants, hydration, and timing.

Protein

Why?

Challenging exercise naturally causes slight damage to muscle fibers. Protein provides both the signal and materials needed to repair and rebuild muscles.

How much?

The general recommendation is to have about 0.3 g protein per kg bodyweight for maximal muscle rebuilding. For most athletes, this comes out to about 15-30 g protein.

Some great protein foods:



Carbohydrates

Why?

Carbs are the body's preferred energy source. Hard training can deplete carbohydrate stores in the body, also known as glycogen. Replenish glycogen after training to fuel up muscles for the next training session.

How much?

The general recommendation is to have 2x to 4x as much carbohydrate as protein in recovery nutrition. More carbs are needed when training is more intense and longer in duration.

Some great carbohydrate foods:



Antioxidants

Why?

Exercise naturally causes oxidation in the body. This can result in inflammation which delays the recovery process. Antioxidants fight oxidation to decrease inflammation and help the body recover quicker to be ready for the next training session.

What kinds?

There are many types of antioxidants that help in recovery. A good rule of thumb is to include lots of different colors of fruits and veggies in your everyday diet to keep your body 'stocked up' on antioxidants. Supplement forms of antioxidants are not preferred, and in some cases can actually increase inflammation. Stick to real foods for antioxidants.

Some great antioxidant foods:



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Hydration

Why?

Good hydration means balancing fluid and electrolyte levels in the body. Hydration is essential for body temperature regulation, muscle and cognitive function, and more. It is important to reestablish hydration by replacing fluids and electrolytes lost mostly through sweat during training. The main electrolytes lost are sodium, chloride, and potassium.

How and how much?

The general recovery recommendation is to drink 1.5x the amount of fluid lost during training. Find the difference between pre- and post-training body weight and add the volume of any liquid consumed during training to see how about how much fluid was lost. Electrolytes should also be prioritized through liquids and/or foods.

Some great rehydrators:



Timing

Why?

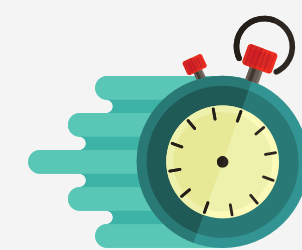
Muscles are primed to intake nutrients and recover in the time right after training. Eating soon after exercise maximizes the effects of nutrition on recovery and is important when there are multiple training sessions in a day, or there is less than 24 hours between sessions.

When?

Start the recovery process by consuming foods and fluids within 30-60 minutes of the end of a training session. Full muscle recovery can take 24 hours or more, so good nutrition is important throughout this period for maximal recovery.

In a time crunch?

When recovery is needed within about 8 hours, especially with fuel demanding exercise, aim for 1-1.2 g carbs/kg or 0.8 g carbs/kg + 0.4 g/kg protein per hour for the first 4 hours of recovery. Continue with normal eating afterwards.



Tips for Recovery Success



Plan ahead

Think about your schedule and when you will get in your recovery nutrition



Pack snacks

Bring your planned recovery snack/meal with you so you are ready to go after training



Avoid unnecessary calorie intake

A recovery nutrition meal or snack is likely not needed following easy training

Great recovery snack/meal ideas:

- Smoothie with fruit, yogurt, milk, nut butter
- Sandwich with tuna, veggies, avocado
- PB&J sandwich and a glass of milk
- Fruit, nut, and granola yogurt parfait
- 2-3 eggs, cheese stick, crackers, piece of fruit
- Pasta with sauteed veggies and grilled chicken
- Cereal with milk
- Salad with quinoa, salmon, roasted veggies
- Stir fry with beef, veggies and brown rice