

Exercise Recovery Nutrition Plan - Who Needs It

How should you refuel your body after exercise? We seem to be surrounded by commercial recovery foods and fluids. These recovery foods and fluids offer a combination of carbs and protein, but are they the best for exercise recovery nutrition? If you are an athlete who exercises one or two times a day to the point of total exhaustion, you most definitely need to focus upon adequate recovery nutrition. A few examples of this type of an exerciser would be swimmers preparing for competition or even high school males and females preparing for any type of sport competition. For those athletes who need to focus upon an adequate recovery nutrition plan, you will be better off planning in advance the right foods and fluids to replace calories, carbohydrates, protein, fluids and sodium. Your best choices are probably not a commercially prepared plan. If you are tired, time is an issue and are without a planned ahead nutrition recovery plan, the simplest solution is to drink less water and more cranberry, grape or any other of your favorite fruit juice. Juices provide the fluid, carbs and calories you need right after strenuous exercise. If you need to lose weight and restrict calorie intake you are better off to fuel your body appropriately in daytime to ensure your ability to perform during strong workouts. Enjoy a light dinner and fewer evening snacks. The worse thing you can do is restrict calories during the day and exercise on an empty stomach. If you exercise solely for good health and fitness three or four times a week for 30 to 60 minutes per session, you can be less focused on recovery nutrition. Your body does not become depleted during fitness work-outs. You also have plenty of time to "naturally" refuel before the next work-out. What is a good recovery nutrition plan? Since muscles rely on carbohydrates, the athlete should plan to replenish depleted blood sugar and muscle glycogen within 30 minutes of post-exercise. It may require some concentration and definitely some planning to refuel your body with the appropriate carbohydrates after an intense work-out. Athletes who weigh 100 to 200 pounds need 300 to 600 calories of carbohydrates repeatedly every two hours for six hours. Now....the worse thing you can do is not plan ahead to have the appropriate carbohydrates on hand and grab a donut, a hot dog, a burger or chips right after your intense work-out. These things will not refuel your blood sugar and muscle glycogen and your muscles will of course not recover from the demands of strenuous exercise. If this type of eating continues your health will suffer some dire consequences. Be wise and plan ahead with the appropriate carbohydrates. Some quick sources would be an instant breakfast drink (I use these for myself often and always feel an instant healthy boost of energy). Fruit smoothies are excellent sources of carbs, fluids and protein. Dehydration is indicated by scanty, dark urine. Thirst is a poor indicator of whether or not you have had enough to drink. If you become severely dehydrated you may need 24 to 48 hours to totally replace the loss. To combat severe dehydration sip on an enjoyable beverage until your urine is pale yellow like lemonade. Fruit juices, smoothies and milk shakes are better than sport drinks. It is better to drink orange juice than Gatorade. Orange juice has much more potassium. Your best bet is to prevent dehydration altogether. A simple way to determine how much fluid you need is to weigh yourself naked before and after an hour of hard exercise during which you drank nothing. A two pound per hour loss equals one quart. In this example you would need to drink 8 ounces every 15 minutes of exercise. When you sweat during exercise you lose sodium. You would have to sweat hard for more than 4 to 6 hours before you would actually deplete your body's sodium supply. An athlete exerciser can easily replace sodium losses with just a standard diet that offers 6 to 12 times the amount of needed sodium. A sodium recovery diet for athletes could consist of eating salty foods such soup, pretzels, salted crackers. Sport drinks are a weaker source of sodium as compared to soup, pretzels and salted crackers. Should not be too difficult to pack extra pretzels or salted crackers for your strenuous work-out sessions. Muscles need time as well as adequate carbs and calories to refuel and heal. Take a day off after a hard workout to allow your muscles to recuperate. Daily hard exercise does not increase performance. It only increases your chances for injury. Exercising to Lose Weight or to Become Healthier? You really should try and separate exercise from weight loss. Think of exercise as something you do for enjoyment that will in turn make you healthier, fit and more able to withstand stress. If you need to lose weight, pay attention to your calorie intake and cut back a couple 100 calories a day for one year while you exercise for enjoyment. You should reap rewards both in how you feel as well as how you look. Taking a day off between work-outs is also recommended for the exerciser who seeks good health and fitness from their exercise routines. You need to allow your body to recover and heal. Overdoing it will not bring you faster or better results. You will probably end up with injury instead. However, you will not need to focus upon an exercise recovery nutrition plan. You can still use the advice given here for athletes, but in general, you will not suffer any dire consequences if you do not practice an exercise recovery nutrition plan.

About the Author

Offers pediatric and adult nutritional products including Similac, Isomil, Ensure, and Pedialyte as well as enteral.

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