

A Recipe for Recovery

Adequate recovery is essential for peak performance, gaining the full benefits of intense training, and in the prevention of, and recovery from injury.

Failure to recover from strenuous exercise can lead to excessive fatigue, poor performance and illness. Learning how to listen to your body and implement recovery strategies is as important as learning how to train and play.

There are many strategies that can be used to enhance recovery and you can consider some of the ideas listed below to develop your own recipe for success.

Hydration

Thirst is not a good measure of hydration - once you are thirsty you are already starting to dehydrate.

Replacing fluid losses as soon as possible after exercise is vital for recovery. If hydration does not occur, recovery will be incomplete. A good monitor is to weigh yourself before and after exercise. Every kilogram lost represents approximately one litre of fluid loss. To reduce the effects of dehydration, athletes must pre-hydrate, by consuming lots of fluids over the days before and on the day of training and games. Athletes should continually sip fluid in the 2 hours before a game or training. Using a sports drink to rehydrate has an added advantage of boosting rehydration as the glucose and sodium in the drink helps facilitate water absorption and retention by the body. The carbohydrates in sports drinks aids the replacement of muscle glycogen at the same time.

Players should get used to having a drink bottle in their hand at all times.

Refuelling

Energy stores are depleted after physical activity. The optimal time to start to replace carbohydrate levels is as soon as possible in the first 30 minutes. In the first 5 minutes after exercise it is important to aim for an intake of at least 50g of high GI carbohydrates.

- eg. 800 – 1000 ml sports drink
50 g jelly lollies
muesli bars
large bread roll filled with a banana
round of jam or honey white bread sandwich

These snacks enter the bloodstream rapidly and increase the secretion of the hormone insulin which promotes faster carbohydrate storage in muscles. Moderate to high GI fruits like watermelon, pineapple and banana will provide fructose for greater glycogen replacement. Follow this with a low fat high-carbohydrate meal (including some lean protein) as soon as possible.

Relaxation

Athletes need to learn to get physical and mental rest to achieve maximal recovery. Poor sleep is related to a reduction in problem-solving ability, logical reasoning, physical performance, and can cause tiredness and lethargy, particularly over a few days. Rest allows the body to heal injured areas and replenish energy and fluid stores. Athletes need to learn what strategies best help them to relax: music, baths/showers, pool recovery, stretching, massage, meditation.

Recipe for Recovery

Ingredients

- Fluids
- Carbohydrates
- Stretching
- Shower
- Self massage
- Relaxation skills
- Relaxing music
- Plenty of good food easily available
- Happy thoughts- positive self-image

Method

1. First five minutes after exercise- recover energy

- drink and eat
- stretch while warm
- walk or move lightly
- check fluid losses

2. Five to ten minutes after exercise

- In shower
- Alternate hot and cold water.

3. First hour after exercise

- Drink plenty of fluid
- Pool recovery session
- Eat more food
- Use relaxation techniques to unwind.

4. In the evening

- Shower or spa
- Stretch and Self massage- especially feet and legs.
- Do something enjoyable- read, listen to music, watch TV.

5. Just before bed

- Switch off and prepare for sleep.
- Use relaxation skills

**Work Hard + Recover Well
=
Best Performance**

Pool Recovery Sessions

Recovery sessions consisting of light exercise and stretches are useful in the hours following intense exercise. Pool sessions are particularly good as they reduce the loading of the joints.

A typical pool session would include:

- 3 minutes of slow walking in waist deep water;
- 2 minutes stretching;
- 2 minutes light jogging;
- 5 minutes movement of limbs through whole range of motion; (use motions similar to dynamic warm-up)
- 2 minutes walking in water;
- 5 minutes stretching in water.

Cold Water Immersion for Recovery

Post exercise swelling is often experienced in muscle compartments.

- This is often felt as “tight or heavy legs”.
- This swelling is due to increased blood supply to exercising muscles.
- Increased fluid is drawn into the muscle. Exercising increases muscle temperature and the increase in temperature increases the permeability of the cell wall of the muscle so fluid can seep in and swelling occurs.

Reducing Muscle swelling after exercise will speed recovery. This can be achieved by cooling the muscles.

This can be safely done by:

1. Showering;
 2. Immersing on clean container, bath filled with cold water;
 3. Immersing in cold pool;
 4. Immersing in ocean.
- **Always ensure that skin is clean before entering water.**
 - **Avoid soaking open wounds**
 - **Avoid placing ice directly against skin**
 - **Avoid this treatment if have a virus, skin infection, or poor circulation.**
 - **If using pool always keep head out of the water.**

Competition Recovery Activities

Immediately after game or training:

Drink/eat
Walk/move (about 5 minutes)
Stretch while warm
Hot/Cold shower

That evening/end of day:

Manage injuries (RICER)
Eat well
Hot/cold shower
Stretch and self massage (legs)
Use relaxation skills 10 – 15 minutes

Next Day:

Check weight and hydrate
Eat well
Swim and stretch in pool AND / OR
hot/cold spa or shower
Walk for 30 minutes or light activity

Each Week:

Full massage
Pool/stretch sessions
Time out to relax

Note:

Get up at the same time each day
Check weight each morning