

DO YOU/CAN YOU
DO THIS?
SHORT WELLNESS
SELF-CHECKS

What is a Good Recovery Eating

SPORTS NUTRITION SERIES



Summary: For athletes: After your workout, your body tries to rebuild its glycogen (muscle carbohydrate) stores as well as repair and regrow muscle proteins. Eating the right nutrients soon after you exercise can help your body get this done faster. It's especially important to eat carbs and protein after your workout. Read on for details.

Recovery Eating

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Some popular recovery foods among athletes include:

- Peanut Butter and Jelly or Turkey or Tuna sandwiches on whole wheat
- Pasta dishes.
- Rice bowls with vegetables and beans or chicken.
- A banana and low-fat chocolate milk (full-fat milk may be harder to digest after a workout)
- Whole-grain crackers and peanut butter.
- A smoothie with yogurt and frozen berries.
- Healthy Cereal with Milk

Recovery Eating

As mentioned right after exercise is a great recovery window for athletes. If you will be exercising hard again you should plan to eat as soon as tolerable after your first workout. You should eat a combination of carbohydrate sources to refuel depleted muscle carbohydrate stores and protein to repair and build muscles from mostly unprocessed foods. Insulin secretion, which promotes glycogen synthesis, is better stimulated when carbs and protein are consumed at the same time. According to N. Clark although engineered sports foods may advertise a 3-to-1 or 4-to-1 ratio of carbohydrate to protein, you need not get obsessed about the exact ratio. I certainly do not. The idea is to eat primarily carbohydrate with 10 to 20 grams of protein, depending on your body size (more precisely 0.15 g protein/lb or 0.3 g/kg of body weight). That offers plenty of protein to optimize muscle synthesis. Besides the carb and proteins rich foods have veggies for their fiber and vitamins.

For those who want specifics: Target about 0.5 gram of carbohydrate (1 g/kg) and 0.1 to 0.15 gram of protein per pound (0.25 to 0.3 g/kg) of body weight every hour for four to six hours (ACSM 2016).

Let's assume that you weigh 150 pounds (68 kg). The equation would look like this:

$150 \text{ lb} \times 0.5 \text{ g carbohydrate} = 75 \text{ g carbohydrate} = 300 \text{ cal carbohydrate}$

$150 \text{ lb} \times 0.1\text{-}0.15 \text{ g protein} = 15\text{-}22 \text{ g protein, more easily } 20 \text{ g protein} = 80 \text{ cal protein}$

Recovery is not just about what you consume directly after working out the process is ongoing. It is best to continue to eat small, well-balanced meals of carbs and protein every 3–4 hours. **You can eat more than the calculated amount, but extra carbohydrate and protein will not hasten the recovery process according to N. Clark.** Other research have shown that ingesting a little more protein 20–40 grams seems to maximize the body's ability to recover after exercise (ref1, ref2, ref3). You may want a little more protein but I would not go over 30 grams. Choose foods that taste good, settle well, and help you feel better. Athletes who train 10 hours a week should consume about 2.5 to 3 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight (5 to 7 g/kg) per day; those who train 20 hours a week need 3 to 5.5 grams of carbohydrate per pound (7 to 12 g/kg), depending on the length and intensity of the workout. If exercise diminishes your appetite, you might find liquids more appealing than solid foods. Liquids and solid foods refuel your muscles equally well. Maybe try chocolate milk or a protein/fruit smoothie.