

The Workout Doesn't Stop until the Recovery Begins

By John Ruibal, MS,RD, CSSD, LD

Every wonder why your muscles seem to always be sore after your workouts? It could be that you are not properly refueling after your workouts.

Many times when you finish a workout, you get something to drink, cool down maybe grab a shower or jump in the car to home, work or school. This can set your recover back and you may not be refueled for that next workout. This can build over the week and if you do multiple workouts during the week by Friday you are out of energy and fuel. So how do you make sure that you aren't running on empty between workouts?

Refuel with a recovery drink or food within 30 minutes after a workout and top off your tank over the next six hours eating carbohydrates and protein spread out every 2 hours. So how much should you consume during this 6 hour window?

A good rule is to consume one gram of carbohydrate for every pound and one fourth of your weight in pounds as grams of protein. Another way to look at it is take your weight in pounds. This number is the grams of carbohydrates you should take in. Take the same number and divide by 4 this is your protein requirement in grams. Here is an example for a 160 pound runner:

160 Pounds = to 160 grams of carbohydrate

$160/4 = 40$ grams of protein

Within the first 30 minutes post workout this runner should consume 30 – 50 % of this requirement to benefit the most. In this example that would be 50- 80 grams carbohydrates and 13 – 20 grams of protein.

Many of the commercial recovery drinks are right in this carbohydrate to protein ballpark. A few examples of these products are Recoverite®, Endurox®, and Muscle Milk® to name a few. An old standard of mine is the original Slimfast® which has 40 grams of carbohydrates and 10 grams of protein. A good friend of mine that is a top American Masters runner uses ensure®. And I am sure you have seen the commercial with our San Antonio Spurs that are drinking Chocolate milk. This is another good recover beverage as long as you tolerate dairy and lactose after a workout. Bottom line this is the first phase of your nutrition recovery and the first 30 minutes is the most important.

Two – Three hours later you should take in another 10 grams protein and 30 – 40 grams of carbohydrates. This may sound like a lot of food but this meal would be a ½ a turkey sandwich and a piece of fruit, or a bowl of oatmeal and 1 egg. Finish the morning off with a light lunch. This may seem like a lot of calories but at 4 calories for a gram of carbohydrate and protein this complete morning comes in at 800 calories add in 10grams of fat and the morning total still comes in at under 900 calories.

Having fresh fruit and vegetables available is another way to get high quality carbohydrates that are low in calories. Lean lunchmeats are a good source of protein and at 7 grams of protein per ounce you only need a few ounces. Nuts are another good source of protein but again a small hand full will get you the protein you need. If Fresh fruits and vegetables, lean lunch meats and nuts aren't available during your day, make sure you pack a small cooler to have them available for you to graze on. Bottom line you have to refuel to reenergize. The first 30 minutes after the workout are important but you don't have to get all of your calories in that first half hour.