

Newsletter

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Recovery: The Key to Continued Athlete Success

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Ensuring young athletes have the time and the tools they need to recover is an important component of any balanced training program. Many athletes feel pressures to excel in sport and may not naturally take time to properly recover so it is important that coaches, teachers and parents implement recovery protocols to help youth athletes build healthy habits.

Recovery should include restoration of the body and the mind. Strategies to aid in recovery include:

Rehydrate: after exercise it is important for athletes to replenish the fluids that they lost while training. A general rule is to drink 125-150% of estimated fluid lost during exercise within the first 6 hours of finishing exercise. When rehydrating, athletes should add a small amount of salt to their water or food to help replace electrolytes lost through sweat.

Refuel: after exercise it is important for athletes to replenish the body's energy stores with food. Replacing glycogen stores can be done through immediately consuming (within 1 hour of finishing exercise) 1-1.2 g of carbohydrate per kg of body weight. Protein stores should also be replaced after exercise because during exercise muscle proteins are broken down. Both endurance and resistance athletes should aim to intake 10-20 grams of lean protein within the first hour of completing intense exercise. It should be noted that eating protein and carbohydrate together immediately after exercising is suggested to be the most beneficial to the athlete's nutrient replenishment and recovery. An example of this recovery meal could be a large bowl of cereal with banana and low fat milk.

Cool Down: following exercise it is important to slowly cool the body down through stretching exercises that promote the removal of waste products, such as lactic acid, that has accumulated in the muscles during exercise. The cool down should last for 5 to 15 minutes and include slowing the pace of the activity (ex. Slowing stroke speed for swimmers) followed by a series of stretches. Some athletes use deep water running and cold water immersion immediately after intense exercise to aid in recovery but the evidence for this mixed and many professionals believe that the advantages are largely psychological.

Injury Management: this is an ideal time for athletes to seek professional help to attend to any injuries that they may have sustained during sport. Both chronic and acute injuries should always be addressed and fully treated by medical professionals.

Cross training: engaging in other sports allows the athlete to experience other activities, promote flexibility, and avoid muscular skeletal imbalances from single sport training

Massage: many athletes report soft tissue treatment as being advantageous in relieving tight muscle tone and stress. Massage can also help increase range of motion and increase circulation (increasing oxygen and nutrients).

Rest and Involvement other interests: allowing the athlete to rest from sport, allows the physiological strains put on the body during sport to subside and allow for physiological adaptations to occur. An increased level of Injury and illness has also been reported when athletes are tired and feel "run down." Allowing the athlete to rest and engage in activities outside of sport will help promote psychological well being and overall be beneficial to the athlete both in sports and overall life balance

Resources: Brukner, P. and Khan, K. Brukner and Khan's Clinical Sports Medicine Brukner, P. and Khan, K. (2007) Brukner and Khan's Clinical Sports Medicine. 4th ed. North Ryde: McGraw-Hill.