

What to eat after exercise

RECOVERY NUTRITION

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Can the foods you eat after exercise make you a better athlete or help you get the most out of your workouts? An often overlooked key to optimal fitness is the post-exercise meal. Expert sports nutritionist Sharon Richter, RD, calls it recovery nutrition – here's her advice for refueling after your next sweat.



RECOVERY NUTRITION MAKES SENSE

Whether you're training for your next triathlon or simply thriving on your daily workouts, proper nourishing and rehydrating after exercise can keep you primed for every workout – and when you are competing, ensure you perform to your potential.

According to New York-based registered dietician Sharon Richter, who is a registered dietician on the [HealthiNation.com](#) advisory board and also starred as the nutrition expert for three episodes of the *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, the post exercise meal – preferably a carb-protein combination is crucial to optimal recovery and consistency in training.

“Within 15 minutes of exercise one should replace carbohydrates. They were stored as glycogen and, if eaten within this time frame, are more likely to be restored,” she explains. “Protein in combination with carbohydrates should be consumed within two hours of exercise completion. Protein will help rebuild and repair muscle as well as aid in water absorption.”

HYDRATION IS ESSENTIAL

You've heard the adage, “Drink eight (8-ounce) [glasses](#) of water a day.” But if you are sweating buckets during your workouts, you need to be even more diligent about drinking the 64 ounces and then some.

Richter says, “To make sure you are getting the hydration and immediate glucose (carbohydrate) replenishment, it is often easiest to use a recovery drink. Look for one that is low in sugar and ideally sweetened with [fruit juice](#) or agave to prevent quick spikes in sugar.” (The nutritionist and avid exerciser recommends the drink Code Blue.)

Drink a recovery drink within 15 minutes post-workout to help expedite your recovery and replenish the water, glycogen and nutrient loss from exercise.

YOUR POST-EXERCISE MEAL

Within two hours after your workout – when your muscles are starving for nourishment – Richter advises refueling with a carb-protein meal with a 4:1 ratio of grams of carbohydrates to grams of protein. A simple nosh on nuts, yogurt or lean protein, and fruit will keep you from feeling exhausted when it's time for your next sweat session.

BENEFITS OF RECOVERY NUTRITION

A well-timed post-workout recovery drink and meal can ensure proper [muscle growth](#) and replenishment of the fluids and nutrients needed after exercise as well as help prevent muscle

