

Use these tips to improve your hydration and recovery nutrition strategies and perform better.

What you eat post-workout is just as vital to your health as any of your other meals, even breakfast, often called the most important meal of the day. After a workout, your body is dealing with a stress, dehydration, and broken down muscle. Eating a meal or snack after completing your training session can help you bounce back faster, build muscle, and perform better. Use the tips below to create the perfect post-workout meal.

TIP #1 Replenish Carbohydrates

After a workout, your muscles are broken down and need fuel, or carbohydrates. Your body stores carbohydrates as glycogen that's burned off for energy during training. The longer your training session, the more glycogen you use.

To refuel your body and increase energy, consume 0.6 to 1.2 grams of carbs per kilogram of body weight. For lighter sessions, stick to the lower end (0.6) and use the higher end (1.2) for hard, long sessions. Calculate your carbohydrate needs by dividing your weight (in pounds) by 2.2, that's your weight in kilograms, and multiply by 0.6 to 1.2. A few good carbohydrate options with 30 g of carbs (adjust serving sizes to meet your needs) include half a whole wheat bagel, 1.5 cups of cereal, two slices of whole wheat bread, 1 cup of pasta, 1 medium baked or sweet potato, a banana, or 2 cups of blueberries.

TIP #2 Rebuild with Protein

While carbs refuel your body, you also need protein, which aids in muscle protein synthesis needed to create and repair damaged muscle tissue. Research shows that this powerful combo of carbs and protein is the most efficient for post-workout recovery. To provide your body with the protein it needs post-workout, you need 0.3 to 0.4 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. Calculate your protein needs by dividing your weight in pounds by 2.2 and multiplying by 0.3 or 0.4, depending on your training intensity. Good protein sources include 3 ounces of tuna, chicken, salmon, or lean red meat (20 g), two eggs (12 g), 1 cup of cottage cheese (28 g), 1 cup of milk (8 g), 1 cup of low-fat Greek yogurt (23 g), 4 ounces of tofu (18 g), or a scoop of whey protein (23 g).

Create your own recovery meal using the carbohydrate and proteins of your choice or use two scoops of EAS Recovery Protein, which is an ideal blend of carbohydrates (40 g) and whey protein (20 g).

TIP #3 Rehydrate

When you exercise and sweat, your body loses fluids that need to be replenished. If you don't drink enough during your workout, your body becomes dehydrated. Dehydration can decrease aerobic and muscle endurance and fine motor skills and increase the risk of cramping and fatigue. Monitor your hydration by weighing yourself before and after your workout. If you lose more than one percent of your body weight, you're not hydrating properly during your workout.

To hydrate properly, drink 20 ounces of water an hour before training and drink another 10 ounces 10–20 minutes before. During training, drink 4–6 gulps of fluid every 15 minutes. For light rides or training sessions where you're not sweating much, drink water. If you're training intensely, longer than 60 minutes, or in the heat, or you're prone to cramping, choose a sports drink. Electrolytes found in sports drinks, specifically, sodium and chloride, optimize hydration. Just 8 ounces of sweat has 270 milligrams (mg) of sodium and 240 mg of chloride. When choosing a sports drink, look for one with at least 200 mg of sodium per 8 ounces.

After a ride or training session, aim to drink 16–24 ounces of fluid for every pound of weight you lost. If you need to hydrate faster or you feel like you need more than water, choose a sports drink.

Take Home Message: Combining proper hydration with a post-workout meal with both carbohydrates and protein within 30 minutes of ending your ride or training session will maximize the impact of your training and keep you feeling great all the way up to race day.
