

When thinking about recovery nutrition after exercise, it's useful to consider the three Rs:

- Refuel energy and glycogen stores with a source of carbohydrate
- Repair muscle with a source of protein
- Rehydrate with fluids and electrolytes to replace sweat losses

*The advice below is generalised for the recreational exerciser and specific nutrition requirements will differ depending on the level of intensity and duration of physical activity.*

So, what does that look like in terms of a meal or snack? Depending on the amount and the intensity of exercise that you do, the amount of food your body will need for recovery may vary. If you have more than one exercise session in the same day then it is important to get these foods and fluids in quickly. In the first 60 to 90 minutes after exercise is when the body is most effective in terms of replacing carbohydrate and promoting muscle repair. However, these processes continue to work well for another 12 to 24 hours after exercise. A great way to do this is to use your next main meal as your form of recovery nutrition, including the three Rs previously mentioned. If this isn't possible, you might like to have a small snack until you are able to have your next main meal.

Here are a few carbohydrate and protein-rich suggestions that you might like to choose from:

- A small bowl of muesli with yoghurt and a piece fruit; or
- A lean meat, cheese and salad sandwich or wrap; or
- 1-2 eggs or a small tin of baked beans on a piece of toast; or
- Some dairy foods can provide each of these key components, as they are a great carbohydrate, protein, fluid and electrolyte source – e.g. a fruit-based smoothie with a piece of fresh or frozen fruit, milk and/or yoghurt
- Protein powders are not essential – the general population do not require protein powders, as protein needs can be met through food. However, they can be convenient for someone that struggles to get in food post-exercise or has high energy requirements

Again, hydration is also extremely important after exercise - be sure to rehydrate to replace sweat losses. Water should be the drink of choice for most people; however, sports drinks may play a role if needing to ingest both carbohydrates and fluids/electrolytes at the same time.

If you are competing, make sure your post-exercise nutrition and hydration strategies are trialled and tested prior to race day to ensure they work for you, especially if you are competing again within a short time frame. Trialling the types and also the timing of recovery foods and fluids after training and practice sessions will help you maximise your recovery on race day. For personalised and tailored sports nutrition advice, [find an Accredited Sports Dietitian](#) near you.