

RUNNING RECOVERY TIPS

What can be worse after a race or run than waking up the next morning with fatigued, stiff sore muscles? In fact most of the time, delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS) is more likely to take affect 24-48 hours post workout. There are several ways to recover, and knowing what works best for you will be hugely beneficial in preparing for your next training session.

What is running recovery?

Recovery is ensuring the body can repair itself, so you can perform and push towards a powerful maximum the next time you compete or train. Our recovery initially begins from the moment you begin our cool down. Preparing our muscles for the next session should be the first thought in mind. Therefor stretching, nutrition, compression, massage and ice baths can be extremely relevant in preparation leading up to the next training session or race. Following are some of the key points of recovery.

Nutrition for Recovery

After a long hard workout, the last thing you want to do is worry about what you are going to refuel your muscles with. Part of a good recovery is organising and preparing what you are going refuel your body with, ideally before you've began your race or training! This will help ensure your body gets the required nutrients immediately. This is something many of us often forget or don't have time to do – in fact, not many of us realise how vital nutrition and diet is to our body's recovery. We then end up reaching for whatever we set eyes on first – not always the most nourishing! So planning a snack beforehand is vitally important to our recovery.

Your muscles will need a relatively high carbohydrate and protein intake almost immediately post workout. Replenishing and repairing muscle tears, protein will aid muscle recovery and help rebuild for the next session. Carbohydrates will replenish your body's glycogen stores.

It's generally good to prioritise real food in addition to supplements, as it offers more nutrients. However, Science in Sport in particular have a couple of decent tasting protein shakes, with a good protein and carbohydrate content. Try Rego Recovery or their Nocte night-time protein drink, which has a slower releasing protein and added electrolytes for hydration. I feel confident in recommending them, having used them myself frequently. They're not too heavy on the stomach, but keep me from feeling hungry straight after if I haven't had time to prepare food, or if it's been a late training session.

Stretching for Recovery

This is often an area which is neglected, therefore the next day when we wake up, stiff sore and fatigued muscles greet us! This is easily prevented. We all stretch when we warm up, so why do most of us choose not to after? From a personal point of view I'd say stretchching and cooling down after exercise is even more important than the warm up. Our muscles are like elastic bands in a sense, so when we are nice and warm our muscles become lengthened, and once we become cool they shorten. So most importantly whilst the body is still warm there is a good opportunity for a deep stretch improving muscle flexibility and range of movement.

Cooling down should consist of some very light gentle jogging, and some dynamic stretches will slowly allow the muscles to loosen, preparing them for a lengthier static stretching session afterwards. Aim to hold static stretches between 20-40 seconds.

Ice Baths for Recovery

An Ice bath is one of the most effective ways to recover after a long run. It helps to ensure the muscles, tendons, and nerves return to their normal state, removing waste and lactic acid build up, and allowing the body to function better. The cool temperature allows the blood vessels to constrict and flush away the lactic. Inflammation and swelling will also be lessened as a result of cooling the body's core temperature. How to have an ice bath:

- A half-filled tub of cold water (waist-hip height) at a temperature of around 60 degrees
- Two bags of ice cubes. Ice baths are much more bearable if we allow our body temperature to adapt to the coolness of just the cold water initially – we don't want to shock our bodies, which is what would usually happen if we get straight into a tub of ice filled water!
- Remain in the bath for around 10-20 mins
- The upper body can be kept warm by using a towel or hoodie
- Hot beverages are also an added comfort to pass time!

Massage for Recovery

It's really good to have a massage! I think most would agree, right? Sports massage and deep tissue massage form an effective way to break up and reduce muscle tightness. It can be extremely painful – you will know what I mean if you've ever used some of the TP massage kit, in particular **The Grid**, best for ironing out the quads and IT bands. This company in particular has some of my favourite bits of massage kit, the **Trigger Point Massage Ball** is also great for the smaller muscle groups, works well on the lower back, calves and glutes. It is a much cheaper alternative to a sports massage! But any type of deep tissue massage will break down any niggling knots.

Compression for Recovery

Compression clothing aids and promotes recovery, as it provides the body with a more sustained blood flow and delivers oxygen faster to the muscles. But do they actually speed up recovery? Scientific research provides us with the information which actually suggests that they do. We've no idea of actually knowing how much or how quickly compression works, but I do find myself reaching for a pair of calf guards or full length tights when my muscles tend to feel a little fatigued. I'd say they've been of help to me, especially during the tough winter months. I do think the compression garments are worth having – if you are training frequently enough they will give you an edge on how you feel when you're recovering, their snug fitted feel is comforting and soothing on tired legs especially.