

# What our bodies need after exercise



*By Norma Carroll, Nutritional Therapy graduate at The College of Naturopathic Medicine.*

Good nutrition is vital for optimal sports performance and maintaining peak physical and mental health. Adequate recovery from exercise is important to maintain consistent athletic training, and to prevent athlete burnout or injury. What we eat after exercise can have an impact on muscle recovery and energy levels. It can also impact future performance.

A post-exercise snack should be consumed as soon as possible after exercise, ideally within a 45-minute window, to maximise replenishment of muscle and liver stores of glycogen which is needed for energy. Ideally, a post-exercise snack should consist of 4:1 carbohydrate to protein. This will aid in glycogen replacement and also in maintaining muscle mass. It will also help reduce cortisol levels in the body. Cortisol is a necessary stress hormone, however chronically high cortisol levels can cause the body to retain fat and degrade muscle tissue.

#### **Try this recovery smoothie (serves 2):**

■ Blend 2 bananas, 1 cup blueberries, ½ cup almonds, ¼ cup each of ground flaxseeds, hemp protein, carob powder, 1tsp lemon juice and ¼tsp sea salt.

Rehydration is also important. It is vital to ensure adequate water intake before, during and after a workout.

#### **For a nutritious sports drink:**

■ Blend 3 dates, 2 cups coconut water, juice of ½ a lemon and juice of ¼ lime with 1tbsp agave nectar and 1tsp coconut oil.

Of course each athlete or fitness enthusiast is individual, however the importance of post-exercise refuelling and optimising adequate hydration to aid recovery is important and can enhance performance in the sporting arena. So fuel up!

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