

# Recovery Nutrition for Football



Footballers need to recover well between games if they are to perform well each week. The hard running during a game, plus bumps and knocks, can cause significant muscle damage and result in tightness and soreness. How you 'pull-up' after training and games is largely determined by how you recover. Playing footy also uses up the body's energy stores and may result in large fluid losses which need to be replaced.

## ***The food and fluids consumed following exercise are critical for optimal recovery***

The earlier you start the recovery process, the better your muscles and body will feel for the next training session. Immediately after games, both physical recovery and adequate nutrition are essential to get the body back into top condition.

### **Priorities post-game:**

- Re-hydrate
- Muscle repair
- Replace fuel stores

### **Fluid Replacement**

Trainers do a great job in providing fluids to players during the game, however it is often difficult for footballers to keep up with fluid losses and this leads to a fluid deficit at the end of the game. It is important to replace fluid as soon as possible, with the aim of drinking 1.5 times the amount of fluid lost in the game during the several hours post-game. Water is fine for most people after exercise when it is accompanied by snacks or a meal that can provide other nutrients. However, if a player does not feel like eating solid fluids for several hours then it is important to drink fluids containing nutrients eg. sports drinks, liquid meal replacement such as Sustagen Sport, milk drinks and smoothies.

### **What foods are best for recovery from exercise?**

It is important to consume food and fluids as soon as possible, ideally within 15-30 minutes after the game. Protein and carbohydrate are essential nutrients for recovery. Research indicates that protein is essential following strength training to promote muscle recovery and optimal muscle mass increase. Carbohydrates are also required to replace that burnt during exercise and restore muscle glycogen.

A snack such as a chicken and salad roll (white bread) is the perfect option, containing protein and high glycemic index carbohydrates.

For individuals who don't feel like eating straight away, a liquid meal replacement or milk-based drink is another great choice. Fruit, low-fat muffins, muesli bars or dried fruit/almonds are also suitable post-exercise snacks.

The meal eaten in the hours after the game can make a big difference to recovery, and should contain protein and carbohydrate, but not too much fat.

### **Good choices include:**

- Beef and vegetable stir-fry with rice or noodles
- Pasta with chicken or lean meat tomato sauce, add vegetables or serve with salad
- Chicken and vegetable risotto
- Grilled chicken with vegetables (including potato/pumpkin)
- Home-made pizza (low-fat cheese and lean ham)
- Soup with pasta/noodles/rice and meat/chicken/legumes

**Don't forget to have a large drink with this meal, and sip regularly on fluids during the hours after training and games**

Complete recovery is not achieved in just a few hours after the game, it can often take more than 24 hours. Adequate fluid and food intake is important over the next couple of days to ensure optimal recovery and preparation for the next game ahead!

**The day after a game it is also important that you go for a light run then do a lengthy stretching session or if you have access to a beach or pool the water is a great way to repair muscle fibres that have been damaged throughout the game. If you are going to a pool it is a great idea to swim some laps and then at the end of it actually go through as you would on dry ground a lengthy stretching session.**

## **Exercises in Water**

Rehab in the pool is a great way to loosen up the tight muscles that may have occurred through the game or overnight. Here is a guide and exercises to be carried out post game. These are to be completed in a pool you can stand in other wise just go to where you are able to stand and then back to the edge.

### **POOL**

- Walk six laps slowly building up a little on the last two laps.
- Swim one lap up and walk back – six Laps again
- Go to edge of the pool and now do leg swings forward and back then side to side.
- **Lung Busters-** Lung Busters are done to get your heart rate going again and the blood flow back through your body- You are to swim normally as far as you can without taking a breath complete this five times.
- After this session is completed then go through your stretching routine in the pool.

### **BEACH**

- Start with a slow jog along the beach time yourself should take about five mins 2.5 mins up 2.5 mins back.
- In the water now and if you can go for a light swim along the beach about 20m and walk back.
- Then proceed to do some jogging in the water along the beach to get the blood flowing through your body again about 6 - 15m jogs up and back.
- Once this is done go through your stretches up on dry land.

**Players that do not have access to the water it is a matter of going for a 15min Jog then having a long stretch this will also get the body moving and the blood pumping through the body again.**