

## Recovery after practice and games

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To meet the demands of strenuous exercise, you need to fuel your muscles with high carbohydrate foods before practice and games, as well as afterwards. Choose carbohydrate-rich foods and fluids after rigorous training and competitions to recover faster and minimize chronic fatigue. Use these tips:

**1. Focus your recovery meal on carbohydrate-rich foods.** Your muscles rely on carbohydrates (carbs) for glycogen (energy). For example, choose pancakes (carbs) rather than eggs (protein/fat) or choose pasta over a steak. Limit going fast food after practice or games. Fast foods are typically high in fat and low in carbohydrates; eating such foods can do more harm than good and reduce your ability to recover and play hard in future games.

**2. Eat or drink carbohydrate-rich foods as soon as tolerable after a hard workout or game.** Your muscles are most able to replace glycogen within the first two hours post-exercise. Eating is important to do for back-to-back practices or games. Drink fruit juices or sports drinks for fluid and carbohydrates. If you choose to re-hydrate with water, be sure and eat something too. Foods can include pretzels, breads, fruit, breakfast bars or granola bars.

**3. Eat wholesome fruits, vegetables and juices.** These all contain potassium, a mineral you lose when you sweat. Some excellent potassium and carbohydrate rich foods include oranges, bananas, raisins, and apricots.

**4. Drink LOTS of fluid!** Drink enough to quench your thirst, then drink more. Often it takes 24-48 hours to totally replace fluid you lost through strenuous exercise. Thirst is a poor indicator of whether or not you have had enough to drink. You need to drink until your urine is clear-colored and of a significant amount. Re-hydrating with sports drinks provides you both fluid and electrolytes (sodium and potassium) lost during sweating.

**5. Rest your muscles.** Rest when you can to give your muscles the opportunity to store, rather than burn, glycogen. Rest is an important part of your training and recovery program. By resting when you can, you are investing in your future performance.

*To find a qualified sports medicine physician, visit [www.mnsportsmed.org](http://www.mnsportsmed.org). Minnesota Sports Medicine (MSM) is a network of sports and orthopedic physicians who treat athletes at medical clinics throughout the Twin Cities metro area. For more information about MSM, call 612-273-4800.*