

Top 5 Recovery Snacks

By Chris Rosenbloom, PhD, RD, CSSD

Recovery is a hot topic for swimmers and for good reason. A long pool and/or land workout burns muscle fuel and causes muscle protein breakdown. Eating a recovery snack within an hour of a workout speeds needed carbs and amino acids (the building blocks of protein that make up the protein-rich foods you eat) to replenish muscle glycogen and repair and build muscle tissue. Do you need to buy expensive protein shakes? No, because the same amino acids found in shakes can be found in food for less money and more taste. Here are recovery snacks that provide some carbohydrate and about 20 grams of high quality protein...the amount that most researchers agree is the optimal protein dose for recovery.

1. 2 cups of low-fat chocolate milk provides two important sources of protein: whey and casein. Chocolate milk may truly be nature's recovery beverage because in addition to high quality protein it contains the natural sugar lactose that stimulates insulin, a hormone that helps feed the amino acids into the muscle. Milk also contains as much calcium and 10 cups of spinach to keep your bones strong.
2. 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese with peaches, pears, or pineapple...or any fruit you like. Cottage cheese is rich the amino acid leucine which is thought to be the trigger for muscle protein synthesis. Although cottage cheese doesn't taste salty, it has a higher sodium content than other dairy foods and this might be a good thing if you are a salty sweater (if you see white, salty streaks on your clothing or cap after it dries, you are probably a salty sweater.)
3. 3-ounces of turkey breast on a wheat bagel. Meat and fish provide about 7 grams of protein per ounce, so a 3-ounce portion gets to the needed 20 grams of protein. A three-ounce portion of meat is about the size of a deck of playing cards or a computer mouse.
4. 4 Tablespoons peanut butter and strawberry jam on wheat bread. This is an especially good recovery snack for those who are trying to gain weight. Peanut butter is higher in fat than other protein foods so means higher calories, but not to worry, the fat is the heart-healthy kind of fat.
5. 7-ounces of Greek yogurt with granola or fruit. Greek yogurt is higher in protein than regular yogurt and has a thicker consistency. Because it tastes a bit more like sour cream, sweeten it up with fruit or granola to add the carbs. Greek yogurt also makes a great topping for baked potatoes or cheese nachos as a substitute for higher-fat, lower-protein sour cream.

To get the most out of your training, practice good recovery by eating within the hour after exercise. You will be strong and ready to go for the next workout, which is most likely tomorrow!