

# 5 Proven Tips to Maximize Muscle Recovery



Despite what you may read on some fitness blogs, there's no better way to help your muscles recover than by eating healthy foods and getting a good night's sleep.

Living an overall healthy lifestyle is the most important step you can take to maximize your muscle recovery. No recovery method can make up for poor nutrition and a lack of rest.

Many people believe they need expensive supplements to achieve results from their workouts. Although some supplements have benefits, you're not going to maximize your performance unless you're already taking care of the basics.

In this article, we give you 15 proven tips to maximize your muscle recovery and help you build a more consistent fitness program.

## How our tips are categorized

We've divided our tips into five categories:

- Foods
- Drinks
- Supplements
- Lifestyle Habits
- Things to Avoid

Keep in mind that the following tips are meant to give you ideas of how you can improve your muscle recovery, but they aren't meant to be a comprehensive list that you need to follow point for point.

Your body type, fitness goals, and current level of fitness all play a role in determining the best way to recover. Some techniques, like contrast baths, may help you recover, but their effects are small and likely only relevant to you if you're an athlete.

## **Foods**

### **1. Protein post-workout**

When you exercise, the proteins that make up your muscle fibers become damaged. Consuming protein after your workout can help give your body the raw material it needs to repair this muscle damage.

Research has found that 20 to 40 grams Trusted Source of protein, or roughly 0.4 to 0.5 g/kg (0.9 to 1.1 g/lb) of body weight, is enough to maximize muscle growth.

### **2. Protein pre-workout**

Eating protein before your workout may help increase muscle protein synthesis.

As with post-workout recommendations, research Trusted Source has found 0.4 to 0.5 g/kg (0.9 to 1.1g/lb) of body weight to be the optimal amount.

### **3. Carbohydrates post-workout**

Your muscles store carbohydrates in the form of glycogen for energy. During short-duration and intense exercise, your muscles use this glycogen as their primary form of energy.

If you need to rapidly restore glycogen levels in less than four hours, such as when performing back-to-back workouts, the International Society of Sports Nutrition Trusted Source recommends consuming 1.2 g/kg of body weight per hour with a focus on carbohydrates with a glycemic index (GI) over 70.

White rice, potatoes, and sugar are three examples of carbs in this GI range.

### **4. Eat an overall balanced diet**

Eating an overall healthy diet can ensure that you don't develop any nutrient deficiencies that may impair your muscles' ability to recover.

As a general rule, this means:

minimizing your consumption of ultra-processed foods eating plenty of fruits and vegetables getting at least 1.4 to 1.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight (0.6 to 0.8 g/lb)

## Drinks

### 5. Stay hydrated

Dehydration can impair your muscles' ability to repair themselves. You're especially prone to becoming dehydrated if you exercise in hot or humid weather.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends drinking 16 to 24 ounces of fluid for every pound you lose while exercising.

### 6. Tart cherry juice

ResearchTrusted Source has found that drinking tart cherry juice after exercise may reduce inflammation, muscle damage, and muscle soreness from exercise.

More research is needed to fully understand its effects, but many studies published to date look promising. A typical dose used in research is 480 milliliters per day (about 1.6 ounces).

## Supplements

### 7. Creatine monohydrate

Creatine is one of the most widely studied supplements. Research consistently shows it can help improve muscular strength when combined with resistance training.

ResearchTrusted Source has also found creatine may help athletes recover from intense training by helping reduce muscle damage and inflammation, as well as aiding in replenishing your muscles' glycogen stores.

### 8. Protein powder

Protein powder is a convenient way to add more protein to your diet. Many types of protein powders contain a complete spectrum of essential amino acids. Whey and collagen powders are two popular choices.

## Lifestyle

## **9. Sleep more**

Sleep gives your muscles time to recover from exercise. People who exercise intensely need even more rest than the average person. Some professional athletes allegedly sleep 10 hours or more per night.

Research has found that sleep deprivation may impair muscle recovery by impairing the body's inflammation reaction and the production of hormones that aid muscle growth.

## **10. Massage**

Many athletes incorporate massage in their training to reduce muscle soreness. A 2020 review of studies [Trusted Source](#) found that massage has a small but significant effect on improving flexibility and decreasing delayed onset muscle soreness after exercise.

## **11. Compression garments**

Wearing compression garments has become common among athletes over the past several decades.

There's a limited number of studies looking at their effectiveness for speeding up recovery from exercise. But a small 2019 study [Trusted Source](#) found that they lowered time for body muscle recovery in German handball players.

In the study, the athletes wore the garments for 24 hours and then alternated between 12-hour breaks and 12-hour periods of wearing them for a total of 96 hours.

## **12. Contrast water therapy**

Contrast bath therapy involves alternating periods of submerging in very warm water and very cold water. This change in temperature stimulates the contraction and dilation of your blood vessels and changes your heart rate.

Research [Trusted Source](#) has found that contrast bath therapy may help reduce muscle soreness post-workout. The results are limited and may only be relevant for athletes.

### **13. Cryotherapy**

Cryotherapy is the technique of exposing your body to an extremely cold temperature for a few minutes.

Research has found that it may be able to speed up recovery by reducing pain, inflammation, and muscle tiredness after strenuous activity.

### **Things to avoid**

#### **14. Alcohol**

Consuming alcohol is damaging to many aspects of your health.

Research Trusted Source has found that consuming alcohol after cycling impairs your muscles' ability to replenish glycogen after endurance exercise. Alcohol also impairs protein synthesis in your muscles.

#### **15. Tobacco**

Smoking tobacco negatively impacts your musculoskeletal system.

Although there's a limited amount of research on the effects of tobacco on muscle recovery, there's some evidence that smoking is associated with an increased risk of muscular injury.

Smoking tobacco is also associated with an increased risk of developing joint disease and an increased risk of fracturing a bone.

### **How long does muscle recovery take?**

The amount of time it takes for your muscles to recover from exercise depends on your fitness levels and the difficulty of your workout.

The volume, intensity, and duration of your workout all play a role in determining how taxing it is on your body.

After a relatively light workout, your muscles may be able to recover in 24 hours, whereas a more challenging workout might take two to three days. Very intense workouts might take even longer.

Other factors that can affect your recovery time include:

- how well you sleep
- how much nutrition you're getting
- how much stress you're dealing with

doing exercises that involve many different muscle groups or a near max effort

It's important to give your body time to recover fully after a workout. While you're exercising, you create damage to your muscles. It's only during the recovery period that your muscles can repair the tiny tears that form during exercise. If you don't give your muscles time to recuperate, you risk injuring yourself.

### **How do I prevent injury during muscle recovery?**

The basis of any good training program is small incremental increases in intensity or volume over time. If you jump ahead too quickly, you put yourself at risk of injury or over-training.

Different trainers have different philosophies when it comes to training. Many agree that you should leave your workout session feeling challenged but not completely exhausted.

Even world-class athletes are strategic about which times or years they train at peak intensity.

Designing your program so you work alternate muscles groups in different workouts is a good way to increase the recovery period between sessions.

For example, if you are lifting weights three times a week, try a schedule like this to give each muscle group a full week to recover:

- **Monday:** Back and biceps
- **Wednesday:** Chest and arms
- **Friday:** Legs and core

Athletes training for specific sports, like sprinters or Olympic lifters, often train the same body parts almost every day. They're usually strategic about how they set up their training. They often alternate high- and low-intensity days to give their muscles time to recover.

## **Are there complications from not allowing muscle recovery time?**

If you don't let your muscles recover between workouts, you put yourself at risk of getting injured.

Repeated stress from exercise causes small tears called microtears that lead to muscles feeling sore and inflamed. An accumulation of tears puts you at risk of developing torn muscles, also called muscle strains or pulled muscles.

Muscle strains can range from mildly uncomfortable to complete ruptures that may need surgery to repair. If you're not recovering fully, you'll also likely notice your athletic performance decline over time.

### **The takeaway**

If you don't let your muscles recover fully after exercise, you're putting yourself at risk of getting injured. Muscle injuries can range from mild to complete tears.

If you've stopped seeing improvements in your fitness level, or if your muscles constantly feel inflamed and sore, you may need to spend more time recovering from your workouts.

Whether you're training to stay in shape or are a competitive athlete, the best way to maximize your muscle recovery is with a healthy diet and a good night's sleep.

No other recovery techniques are going to be able to make up for bad habits in these two areas.



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