



Racewalking advice Bulletin board

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Enhancing recovery

When training, one of the most important aspects that is overlooked is:

RECOVERY.

Training is designed to improve your performances, however, tiredness will send you in the opposite direction. So what must you do?

How to enhance recovery, avoid overtraining.

Why do we need to recover? Athletes like to train hard, however, if you get too tired or struggle because the muscles are too sore, you will not improve. Recovery is an essential part of the overall training program. So what do I need to do?

1. Get enough sleep

Ensure you get what you need or do as I do and try and catch up with a weekend "camp" for a couple of hours. Try and adhere to the same going-to-bed-time and wake up time so the body clock stays in sync. There's also a list of things to avoid in the evening before bed to help you get to sleep:

- Caffeine (coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate)
- Nicotine
- Alcohol
- High protein meals
- Stress



2. Use active recovery

Use some light exercise to aid in the recovery of muscles. Light jogging or easy spinning on the bike are both useful options. Water activities such as easy swimming, spas, water running with a vest or just sitting in a pool kicking the legs is a great way to go.

3. Rest Days

These are essential. Many athletes have families or careers/commitments. A day of rest from the stresses of training enables us to break the regime and freshen up. More importantly, it enables us to refill those muscle carbohydrate stores. When to take them is an individual matter but a busy work (stress) day is a good one.

4. Massage



Sports massage from a masseur or done on yourself or by a partner does a number of things to the body:

- Increases blood flow to deliver oxygen and nutrients for recovery
- Provides temporary flexibility gains through warming-up the muscles and tissues
- Psychological effects such as relaxation and stress relief.

5. Stretching

When a person contracts a muscle, they contract some of the muscle fibres in the overall muscle. Depending on the poundage, a muscle will contract a different amount of fibres. Muscle fibres either contract or they either don't, so in order to lift a heavy load, more fibres have to contract. That being said, as you increase the intensity of your workout, more muscle breakdown and fibres intertwine.



After an intensive workout, muscles need to repair themselves and fibres that are entangled impede the recovery process. When you stretch a muscle, tension in the fibres increases, aligning the disorganized tissue in the same line -- like when you pull on a wrinkled shirt. In addition, it keeps the blood flowing and tendons flexible.

6. Food

Exercising long and/or hard uses the muscle, liver and blood stores of carbohydrate. To promote the after-exercise storage of carbohydrates, sports science has suggested the following crucial guidelines:

- Consume a high carbohydrate meal or snack within 30 minutes of training
- Be organised and have suitable food (breads/lollies) and drinks (sports drinks / soft drinks) available where you train
- Aim to consume 1g/kg of your body weight (BW) carbohydrate every two hours until your next meal
- Consume 8-10g/per kg of BW of carbohydrate daily (Banana = 20g, Bread = 15g/slice)
- Avoid alcohol - it inhibits carbo storage.
- High Glycemic Index (GI) foods are best for recovery - lollies, sports drinks, soft drinks, breads and watermelon.
- Small, regular snacks throughout the day / night are the go.



7. Fluids

All endurance athletes sweat but very few drink enough during training. This means drinking after training is crucial to enable the body to return to its normal water balance. The following guidelines are again crucial for the older endurance athlete to enhance recovery of fluids:

- Drink to a plan rather than waiting to be thirsty. Know where the taps are on your run, take enough water / sports drink with you when training, or have a water bottle with you at the track.
- Drink 1.5 to 2.0 times the volume of fluid you've lost. Remember you'll keep peeing and sweating after training.
- Ensure drinks are available after training or racing, preferably sports drinks with glucose and sodium needed to retain water.
- Flavoured drinks are not the best as they encourage drinking and therefore make it more likely you'll drink.
- Sports drinks get fluids and carbo's in at the same time so use them.
- Replace sodium - it helps hold fluid. Sports drinks or staminade will help
- Avoid alcohol or caffeine since they encourage peeing and dehydration



8. Hot and Cold Baths / Showers

This strategy involves taking alternate hot (35-38C) and cold (10-16C) showers for 1 - 2 minutes of hot and 10-30 seconds of cold for 3-4 repeats. Ensure you hydrate before and after the shower / bath session because you'll sweat. At least a hot bath or spa will aid in the blood vessels in the body opening and allowing the waste products to be expelled.

Conclusion

It can't be emphasised enough that recovery from training or racing is just as important as the training itself.

“Read, plan and use the above strategies - they work!”

References:

- http://au.askmen.com/sports/bodybuilding/57_fitness_tip.html
- Dr Peter Reaburn, “Enhancing recovery”, The Master Athlete, Australian Sports Commission, 15th Oct 1997