

Get More from Your Workout the Smart Way

By Richard J. Wolff, RD, LDN

There's no denying Americans love a great deal. In fact, we approach fitness with the same mindset. We want results and we want them now. What many people fail to recognize is that working out is only half of the equation. Working out stimulates change, but it's the recovery phase (what you do after your workout) that allows change to occur. Getting the nutrition and rest your body needs will maximize recovery. Here are three strategies for maximizing recovery and getting more from your workout.

Add Some Protein

Productive strength workouts produce microscopic tears in skeletal muscle. During the recovery phase, your body attempts to repair these tears. The repair process is what leads to stronger, healthier, muscles. After a workout, your muscles are hungry for nutrients that support the repair process. Research suggests that consuming a small amount (10 to 20 grams) of high-quality protein after exercise promotes muscle protein synthesis (recovery) and may enhance the body's response to training.¹

Getting 10 to 20 grams of protein is not hard. To avoid overdoing calories, stick with low-fat options (fewer than 5 grams of fat per serving). Picking the right food comes down to what you like. Personally, I like a refreshing fruit smoothie after my workouts. In less than 3 minutes, I blend up a nutritious fruit smoothie that gives my muscles exactly what they need. My favorite recipe is 2 scoops of chocolate HMR 120, 12 ounces of cold water and 1 cup of frozen strawberries – mixed in a blender on low for 90 seconds. It's simple, enhances recovery and tastes great!

Here are some other high-protein, low-fat foods to consider: 1 cup of low-fat milk, one cup of plain, low-fat yogurt, a fruit smoothie shake made with a meal replacement or protein powder, a sports nutrition bar, 2 ounces of low-fat cheese, 2 ounces of lean beef, poultry or fish, ½ cup of cottage cheese, two eggs, one veggie burger.

Get Some Sleep

In America, busy schedules often lead to a lack of sleep. According to Bonnie Liebman of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, "*the average American sleeps one to two*

hours less per night than he or she did 40 or 50 years ago².” This is an unfortunate trend because sleep deprivation interferes with muscle recovery.

If you are not getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night, you are cheating yourself by not allowing your muscles to fully recover. Getting adequate sleep often comes down to better planning. Get to bed on time, since you’ve already invested in your workout!

Get More Rest

In a country obsessed with doing more, rest can seem counterintuitive. However, when it comes to building strong, healthy muscles, rest is your best friend. Your muscles require rest after intense strength training so that they can recover. Exercise scientists call the recovery process overcompensation. Overcompensation is what leads to stronger, healthier muscles. The trick with overcompensation is that it takes time, more time than people realize.

Recovering from intense, full-body, strength workouts (like the MEDFITNESS Workout) can take 3 to 5 days. That means you don’t achieve the benefits of the workout for up to 120 hours. Working out before your muscles have fully recovered only prevents overcompensation. Thinking that “more is better” (working out more often) is a common mistake. If more were better, you would get stronger and healthier by working out every day. This just doesn’t happen.

The best prescription for achieving full recovery (and maximum results) is to rest at least 3 to 4 days between high-intensity, strength workouts. This translates into two, full-body workouts per week. Strength training more often (such as three times per week) limits strength gains and increases your risk of injury.

Make It Active Rest

Resting your muscles does not mean you should be inactive. Cardio-respiratory activity (what many people call aerobic activity) should be engaged in daily. Expend at least 150 calories every day to maintain your physical and mental health! If you are exercising to lose weight, strive for 300 calories per day! A 30-minute, full-body, strength workout burns approximately 150 calories for women and 200 calories for men.

Get Some Help

MEDFITNESS operates fitness studios that specialize in personal training for as little as \$99 per month. Our high-intensity, full-body workouts take less than 30 minutes and do not require an appointment. To experience our trademarked program, schedule a *Free Trial Workout* by calling (630) 762-1784. To learn more, visit medfitnessprogram.com.

References

1. Gatorade Sports Science Institute, Sport Science Library. Protein Nutrition and Endurance Exercise: What Does Science Say? Martin J. Gibala Ph.D., Department of Kinesiology, McMaster University
2. Unexpected Surprising Findings from the Last 40 Years, Bonnie Liebman. Nutrition Action Health Letter, January/February 2011.