

Recovery [foods](#) are an integral part of [nutrition](#) for sports. Each athlete knows what will work best for him or her during the rounds and the final race. The way the championships are set up, athletes go the rounds with little time for their muscles to restock.

However, to get to the finals, recovery time and recovery foods are very critical during competition, and foods have to be eaten along the way. This is important so that prime fuelling time is not missed.

Athletes, their coaches and management team need to pay careful attention to the food and fluids they consume after each training period, elimination round and finals. Very often, athletes will find that they do not recover as quickly as they should. The goals after each session of physical activity are :

1. Replace the fluids you lost from sweating.
2. Replace your depleted glycogen stores.

Replacing Fluids

After each race, the priority is to replace fluids lost by sweating. To figure out how much fluid you need to replace, you need to figure out how much you lost during your run. You can do this by weighing without clothes before and after competing.

One pound of sweat loss equals 16 ounces of water. For example, if Veronica Campbell-Brown lost two pounds, then she would need to drink one litre of water to replace the liquids she lost. As a safety factor, no more than 20 per cent of [body weight](#) should be lost during competition. If this happens, it means that the athlete should increase fluid intake during competition. An easy and efficient way to self-test rehydration levels is to drink enough water until the urine is almost as clear as the water, or very pale yellow. If the urine is dark and smelly, it means that the body is not properly hydrated.

Rehydrate

To rehydrate properly, the athlete should drink frequently for up to 48 hours. Apart from water, which is well-tolerated, other recovery fluids include:

juices which supply water carbohydrates and electrolytes;

watery foods like watermelon, otaheti apple and soups which supply fluids, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals (electrolytes);

coconut water which supplies fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes;

sports drinks or soft drinks will supply fluids and carbohydrates.

Replacing Muscle Stores

During competition, glycogen stored in the muscles becomes depleted. It is the glycogen that

provides energy for the body during the rounds and finals. Replacing glycogen stores prepares the athlete for the next round or competition.

After competition or training, the athlete should eat within 15 minutes. Within this time, the enzymes responsible for making glycogen are most active and will most quickly replace the depleted glycogen stores. The carbohydrate intake should be 0.5 grams of carbohydrates per pound of body weight, eating every hour for four to five hours.

Eating after competition

Foods high on the glycemic index are ideal to refuel the muscles equally well. Foods that are higher up on the glycemic index (like yams, baked potatoes, bread, juice, oatmeal, sports drinks, raisins, corn, sweet potato, and white rice) provide the quickest replenishment, because these foods enter the bloodstream very quickly to provide nourishment.

To supply 300 [calories](#), the athlete may have:

- a bowl of cereal with milk and a piece of fruit;
- a bowl of soup and a piece of bread or some crackers;
- a sandwich with lean meat, tuna or egg salad;
- an energy bar and a piece of fruit;
- yoghurt with granola and dried fruit or raisins;
- pasta with meat spaghetti sauce

Eat protein to repair the muscles.

Adequate amounts of protein should be eaten to aid athletes in rebuilding their muscles. Protein, like carbohydrates, helps speed the glycogen-replacement process. Studies have shown that having a 3:1 ratio of carbohydrates to protein is more effective after a workout.