



Everything You Need to Know to Recover Fully, Quickly, and Completely!

Crossing the finish line, as you may have realized, is not the end of the game. In the days following your body may still be a little shocked at what just happened. **Everything an athlete does can be measured by about how well they recover - that's when the gains from training come through.**

With that in mind, here's how to bounce back as a stronger, more powerful athlete after an event:

- 1. Keep Your Food Quality Very High:** Recovery food becomes the foundation for new and improved muscle tissue beginning immediately after your hard training or race event. Many people find a smoothie with protein powder to be the perfect recovery meal. If you can tolerate dairy, whey protein is especially beneficial due to immunoglobulins and branched chain amino acids that are naturally present and supply a muscle retention and immune building component. Choose an organic variety and opt for one with beneficial immune boosting herbs, like Nutriveda Shakes. If you are dairy intolerant, Vega Sport makes a superb vegan protein boosted with the addition of branched chain amino acids and glutamine, both of which are excellent for tissue repair. Blend the protein powder with some tart cherry juice to curb inflammation and some dark, luscious berries for a cool, nourishing treat that adds antioxidant rich carbohydrates to restore energy levels and ample protein to repair muscle. It is important to continue to emphasize lean protein, whole grain starches, root vegetables as well as leafy greens and berries for at least 3-5 days post-race (ideally for a lifetime) so that your muscles, tendons, and blood have the most nutrient dense building blocks for rebuilding. Boost consumption of omega-3 fats emphasizing pacific salmon, fish or krill oil, and adding plant based omega-3s such as flax and walnuts. Due to the numerous steps of conversion that happens from plant omega-3s to human needed EPA and DHA, it is best to get these sources from cold-water seafood or omega-3 eggs. The animal does the converting for us, allowing greater absorption of these key anti-inflammatory eicosanoids in the human body.



2. **Ice bath** – Heavy training and racing causes Delayed Onset Muscle Soreness, or DOMS. This is the muscular soreness felt 24-48 hours after hard training or racing. It is caused by the inflammation and pain of torn muscle fibers as a result of intense exertion. By taking an ice bath, you can prevent or significantly reduce the soreness after a hard workout, allowing you to recover more quickly than you would



otherwise. It is believed ice baths benefit the body by reducing the inflammation and swelling of the torn tissue, much like putting an ice compress on a sprained ankle.

3. **Fluids** – Water is second only to oxygen as the single most critical substance necessary to our existence. Intense training generates a lot of sweat and heat during and after the event itself. Drink plenty of fluids for 24 hours after your event to stay cool, rehydrate and maintain adequate energy levels and recovery. Water is used in the body for temperature regulation and is the foundational component of transporting oxygen, nutrition, and waste into and out of cells. How much water is enough? Drink enough that you are no longer thirsty and that your urine is light in color. Some athletes like to weigh themselves after their race and consume 1.5L of water per every kilogram (2.2 lbs) lost. A healthy meal will usually replace electrolytes such as sodium and potassium that are lost during your event, so additional electrolyte drinks are not usually necessary unless you sweat a great deal, it is very hot out, or stomach issues have prevented you from adequately refueling.



4. **Stretching** – Stretch after refueling at the end of your workout or race and continue to stretch periodically for the rest of the day to alleviate stiffness settling in. Plan a light massage or restorative yoga within 2 days after racing to prevent muscular imbalances from developing, excessive tightness, and to increase blood flow to the taxed muscles to facilitate healing. This step is **NOT TO BE NEGLECTED**, even though stretching is what we at VIBRANCE Nutrition call “The Ugly Stepchild of Fitness” because everyone ignores it and finds excuses to avoid it! Stretching post-workout is essential to preventing imbalances in the gait and to prevent injury in the future. Don’t neglect the Ugly Stepchild!



5. **Limit Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs):** Let's face it – training hard and racing harder hurts! It is common practice (and very tempting) to pop aspirin or ibuprofen before and after a big training or racing event to stave off pain and inflammation. However, research indicates long-term use of NSAIDs following muscular breakdown (ie – a hard workout) **DECREASES** the muscle's ability to regenerate new tissue. Be conservative and careful when tinkering with your body's natural processes! Natural ways to combat inflammation include tart cherry juice, ice baths, fish oil and bromelain.



6. **Extra rest** – Heavy training and racing is very stressful and traumatic to the body. It is common for athletes to develop injuries, respiratory infections, and illnesses within days to a week after a race due to the stress and teardown of an intense event. Give in to the urge to nap and go to sleep earlier in the days following a hard event and keep your workload and time on your feet as light as possible.



7. **TREAT YOURSELF!** Regardless of how satisfied or disappointed you are with your performance, do treat yourself! The accomplishment of pushing your physical and psychological boundaries in athletics is nothing short of inspirational and deserves to be rewarded. Creating rewards to celebrate the accomplishment boosts pleasure chemicals in the brain, which creates an environment that will facilitate healing and keep your immune system strong. Again, gentle massage, a day at the spa, a pedicure, or a special meal out are great ways to celebrate and reward your effort.

8. **Mix it Up:** You may be tempted to start running again a few days later, but listen to your body. Mix it up a little for a week or two after a very taxing multi-hour event. Yoga, biking, swimming and walking are great activities that are less impactful on the joints and muscles. Keep physical activity limited to low impact options, especially if you are very tender and sore.



If you've run a marathon, expect at least 4 weeks before you are back to pre-race condition.

9. **Set Your Sights For What's Next:** It is incredibly common for post-race blues to set in after your event, leading to depression, anxiety, and grief. With so much time and dedication taken to get to the starting line, life after the finish may feel aimless and unmotivating. Some of this may be due to unrealistic expectations about what it would mean to finish the event, or expectations about performance. Achievement oriented, type-A individuals (the ones most likely to take on athletic challenges) have a tendency to become so fixated on the goal that the enjoyment and reward of the journey itself is lost. Some of the malaise can be attributed also to physical depletion from months of training. One way to alleviate post-race blues is to make plans for what is next. If you haven't done so before your race, pick out a goal or athletic challenge to work towards in the months following your event. You also may wish to focus on bringing back the aspects of your life that took a backburner to training – socializing, family time, or even sleeping in past 7am! Knowing what is next will allow your mind to continue to move forward and prevent the post-race blues.



10. **Share your experience:** positive or negative, your event is a feat that deserves recognition. Share your experience with others and use it to boost yourself up, celebrate what you've done, and honor the commitment you made from the moment of decision to crossing the finish line. Each race has its own set of stories and events around it – from the bus that broke



down to the runner who stayed with you the last two miles when you wanted to give up. By sharing your experience, you give yourself opportunities to reflect on your accomplishment, learn from it, inspire others, and received support and camaraderie with others. If there is no one in your vicinity you feel comfortable sharing with, reach out to a forum or athletic group on Facebook to share.