



Post Game Recovery

By Jonathon Barrett
CFC Colts Physiopherapist

Why is this important?

- Enables the athlete to restore the body and mind to pre-match levels in the shortest possible time

What are the 4 facets of recovery?

- **Rehydration**- can lose up to 600-1400ml during a match, important to address this through water and electrolyte drinks.
- **Nutrition**- loss of nutrients and energy throughout match and this needs to be replaced. One hour window post match where carbohydrates work to replenish lost glycogen (energy) stores in body. High GI foods initially (gatorade), low GI later on (Fruit, Meat and Salad sandwich).
- **Psychological**- important to spend quality "switch off time" away from competition, can freshen up mentally and improve performance.
- **Physical**- to address the muscle damage that occurs throughout the match.

What are the best physical recovery strategies?

- **Ice/Ice baths**- used to reduce tissue damage, slow metabolism and control inflammation following muscle damage. 2 minutes duration for ice baths, if icing specific area- 20 mins duration.
- **Hot/Cold Contrast**- stimulate blood flow, reduce inflammation and remove waste products.
- **Active recovery/massage**- facilitate the removal of waste products from muscle, important not to massage over acute injury site.

If you have received an injury... RICE! NO HARM!

- **Rest**- relative rest to allow tissue healing
- **Ice**- this reduces blood flow, muscle damage and pain
- **Compression**- compression bandage can also reduce blood flow and limit tissue bleeding
- **Elevation**- this decreases blood flow and reduces pressure around the injury site

What not to do if you have received an injury...

- **Heat (avoid first 24-48 hours)**- can lead to an increase in blood flow to the injured tissue, increased blood flow (swelling) = increased tissue damage and pain.
- **Alcohol**- alcohol increases bleeding in tissue, impedes recovery and leads to a general decrease in muscle performance even if you are not injured.
- **Running**- can result in further tissue damage
- **Massage**- over the injured area can increase tissue bleeding in the first 48 hours.



Sample recovery routine

This routine has been structured so that the body can be rehydrated, energy stores can be replenished and muscle can be repaired at an improved rate.

1. Start drinking cool carbohydrate/sports drinks immediately on entering the change rooms. This should continue throughout the recovery session.
2. Have carbohydrate-protein snacks readily available for consumption (for example, meal supplement drinks, sports bars, salad and meat sandwiches).
3. Five-minute walk/jog/stretch routine as soon as practical after the players return to the change rooms.
4. Fifteen-minute recovery circuit, alternating between contrast and active groups:
 - a) contrast: hot shower (37–43 C)/ice bath (12–15 C). Hot–cold contrasts should be completed at a ratio of 3:1 (hot:cold)
 - b) active: bike/walk/stretch at low intensity
 - c) groups to rotate after approximately six minutes
 - d) all players finish with a two-minute ice bath (12–15 C).
5. Have athletes bring food packs for post-match and have them consume this before leaving after a match.
6. Ensure that the post-game meal consists of carbohydrates that have a high glycaemic index.
7. A post-game meal (that is, two to three hours post-game) should consist of high glycaemic index carbohydrates. Some good examples of these dishes are rice dishes, pasta and/or white bread with protein (for example, meat, chicken, etc.).
8. Some athletes have difficulty eating soon after matches, therefore a meal replacement drink (for example, Sustagen or Protein Plus) can be useful.