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Sports Nutrition After Your Workout

The objective of post-workout sports nutrition is to recover as quickly as possible; that means providing nutrients that will replace fuel, help the repair process, and reduce inflammation. These are natural by-products of exercise, especially intense exercise. Nutrition can help the recovery process, and we're learning more about it all the time.

The first priority is to replace muscle glycogen; that helps the muscle, but it also seems to help the immune system as well. Second is to provide protein for any repair that needs to take place, especially after a hard weight-training workout. Whether from bars or shakes, the first 30 minutes after workout is the best time to take these products.

Recently, taking nutrients that reduce inflammation seems to be gaining popularity. The purpose of reducing inflammation is to increase blood flow as well as replacing antioxidants used up during exercise. By its nature, exercise is inflammatory and creates free radicals; antioxidants are used to quench the free radicals, but need to be replaced. Nutrients such as vitamins C and E as well as glucosamine are important, but plant phytonutrients such as turmeric and tart cherry juice also help reduce inflammation.

Sports nutrition has come a long way in my 30-plus years in the field. I used defizzed cola with added dextrose during my first marathon. Today the choices seem endless, and you need to understand the purpose and timing for each type of product. If you use them wisely, they'll help you get the most from the time you're investing in exercise.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet



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