

3 marathon recovery tips

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[Nutrition Expert Dr. Susan Mitchell](#) offered tips for optimal marathon recovery at the [Target Health & Fitness Expo](#), part of the [Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon](#) in St. Paul, Minn., on Oct. 3. They focused on hydration, carbohydrates and protein.

Recovery tip #1: Rehydrate. Immediately after the race, drink water. Then turn to sports drinks. Weigh yourself before running a marathon and after. Note the difference, and drink 23 ounces for every pound lost. Note that the sodium in sports drinks causes runners to reach for even more fluids.

Recovery tip #2: Replenish glycogen stores. Runners lose a tremendous amount of glycogen during endurance races, and it takes 24 hours for the human body to replenish the supply. To speed up the process, eat foods high in carbohydrates, which supply energy to the body and fuel one's brain. Dividing your weight by two will give you the suggested grams of carbohydrates needed. For example, a 140-pound individual should ingest 70 grams of carbs after a race. Portion sizes vary, but a small piece of bread would roughly contain 15 grams of carbs. Look for carb sources that are also whole grain and high in fiber.

Recovery tip #3: Eat (and drink) protein. Although protein isn't an energy nutrient, it repairs, maintains and grows muscles, which are damaged after an endurance race. Eat 10 to 20 grams of protein post-race. The range depends on one's body size and regular caloric intake. Good sources of protein include ham, lean meats, low-fat cheese, nut butters, soy products and beans.

In the past, nutritionists said 15 percent of a person's daily calorie intake should be protein. Now research is suggesting 20 percent to 35 percent. It helps maintain lean body muscle, which burns 30 to 50 calories per day, whereas fat burns only three to five calories per day. Unfortunately with every decade one ages, they lose lean body muscle, an occurrence called [sarcopenia](#).

As far as beverages go, recent research published in the [American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#) shows that low-fat milk is more effective in rehydration than sports drinks such as Gatorade or Powerade. Although sports drinks offer sodium, potassium and carbohydrates, milk also offers protein, calcium and vitamin D, which help speed up marathon recovery.



Dr. Susan Mitchell