

After Event Meal

While many student-athletes are inclined to grab a pizza, French fries, burgers, or chips as they dash home from practice or celebrate a victory on the bus ride home. These foods may not be providing the nutrition they need to recover from the hard exercise and refuel their muscle's needs for the next workout. Even the athletes who pay careful attention to what they eat before and during exercise they may neglect their post-exercise eating habits thinking, "Who cares? I'm done for the day."

This time is important for tissue to repair that took a beating during exercise and replenishes energy stores that are depleted. In addition, during periods of intense training and competition, when there is little time to recover between workouts, post-exercise nutrition becomes an even more important factor in enhancing performance and most of all preventing injuries.

The bottom line is that eating should be considered a part of performance enhancement. Athletes need to plan and schedule their post-activity snacks and meals with even more focus than pre-competition eating, since training occurs at least once a day, whereas competition may only be a few times per week. At the high school level, parents and booster clubs can participate in handling the post game snacks. At any level, handing a large glass of sport drink along with a sport recovery bar to the athletes after workouts or having food available and visible can be a great reminder to refuel. Take advantage of post game wrap-ups to encourage players to eat and drink.

Achieving optimal hydration and glycogen repletion should be a goal for every athlete. Taking a pro active approach to eating by encouraging athletes to pre plan and make time for post-exercise eating will enable an athlete to perform at his or her best, not just today, but everyday.