

Beer after your workout? By Coach Cliff

The HECK with research in regards to sports drinks... I suggest that drinking a natural beverage such as fruit juice, milk or even beer, after exercise; can be more effective for recovery than a highly engineered sports drink. As most of you should know by now we have our Thursday night workout and after a few of us go for a drink... as we like to call it 'Thirsty Thursdays'. Yes, a beer assists your body relax and recover from that strenuous workout, providing you indeed put in the effort.

Most of our workouts last about an hour so rule of thumb is to save recovery drinks for after the session, what I call stretch and hydrate. So, one should choose the hydration that fits the workout. After strength training your body needs protein and after endurance workouts your body wants fluids and carbs. I've found beer to be my recovery drink but check out these suggestions from some notable sports scientists.

After workouts of almost any kind you can help your body bounce back with antioxidants. The theory 'that exercised-induced muscle damage is related to free radicals in your body', which are actually generated while you are working out. I'll mention some recovery drinks that contain antioxidants, but keep in mind that all true recovery drinks contain calories... so weigh your recovery needs carefully and mentally document what you drink throughout the day leading up to your workout.

Best drink for long distance events: CHERRY JUICE

Scientists 'suspect' (watch that word when it comes to research) antioxidants are the key to limiting the inflammation and muscle damage after an endurance (long distance) event, that tart cherries are considered one of the most antioxidant-dense super fruits. Athletes have found it's best to start recovery work a week early and with the regular consumption of tart cherry juice will, before and after a grueling workout, assist your body in fighting off the wear and tear and your strength return more quickly. Suggested recovery Rx: Drink 2 glasses a day for 5 days before event, on the event day and the following day.

Best drink for strength training: LOW-FAT CHOCOLATE MILK

Nutritionists have long touted "MILK" as a magical muscle building drink. By ingesting protein after a strength training workout your muscles have the proper fuel to recover and grow... add sugar to the mix (chocolate) and protein is digested even faster, meaning your muscles bounce back more quickly than after drinking plain milk. Suggested Rx: Drink one glass of low-fat chocolate milk immediately after your workout. DO NOT substitute low-fat milk with 'Muscle Milk'.

Best drink for Yoga or Pilates: COCONUT WATER

Coconut water contains enormous amounts of potassium. Coconut water is perfect for foot cramps, charley-horse type aches and it contains enough antioxidants and minerals to replenish stores that have been diminished through light exercise such as yoga. I do not recommend coconut water after running because of its low sodium content. Recovery Rx: Drink an 8 to 12 oz glass immediately after class.

Best drink for Ultra-endurance events: NONALCOHOLIC BEER

The marathon you spent months training for or that century ride you pushed through are intense enough to raise the body's inflammation levels and also weaken the immune system. Many marathoners have respiratory infections after a big race caused by a weakened immune system. Drinking non-alcoholic beer in the weeks before and after a strenuous event increased the body's immune function, making post-exercise illness less likely. The secret, I'm told, is the drinks innate compounds which are antioxidant, anti-pathogenic (will not promote sickness) and anti-inflammatory. To my knowledge, there have been no tests performed using alcoholic beers. Recovery Rx: 1 liter per day for three weeks prior and two weeks following an event.

I hope this information is helpful to your recovery no-matter what exercise discipline you have chosen. Good luck and DRINK UP!

Coach Cliff