**Tips for Proper Muscle Recovery**

**Introduction**

You wake up the morning following an intense workout and your legs are almost too sore to walk. Your leg muscles are telling you that they need some time to recover. After a hard workout, your muscles may be sore for two or three days and it could take up to 72 hours before the soreness fully disappears. This is called delayed onset muscle syndrome (DOMS). Wait another day or two before continuing your workout schedule if your targeted muscles remain significantly sore. Treat your body gently so your muscles have time to heal.

**Adequate Rest**

Make sure that you are getting enough sleep each night. Proper sleep and rest is a critical piece of the muscle recovery phase that is often overlooked. An intense workout causes small tears in the muscle fibers that needs to heal and quality sleep allows the body to focus on recovery. Do not underestimate the value of a good night’s rest. While seven to nine hours is generally enough sleep, the exact amount of time varies from person to person. Determine the amount of sleep you need based on how you feel the following morning. If you hit the snooze button several times, you are not getting enough sleep.

**Regular Stretching**

Be kind to your muscles and stretch following an intense workout. Stretching improves blood circulation and keeps the tendons flexible. It also places tension on the muscle fiber which aligns the distorted muscle tissue. This is beneficial for the muscle during the recovery phase.

**Proper Nutrition**

Analyze your diet and make necessary changes to accelerate muscle recovery. Eat high carbohydrate foods following an intense workout because they aid in reenergizing the muscles. This includes foods such as rice, dried fruits, fresh fruits, low-fat crackers, energy bars, lentils and yogurt. According to the McKinley Health Center of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, proper muscle recovery requires at least 50 to 100 grams of carbohydrate intake within two hours following a workout.

Protein is also an important part of muscle recovery. You should consume high protein foods like lean beef, chicken, fish, soy, whey, dried beans, nuts and protein supplements because they contain amino acids that are important during the muscle restoration phase. Additionally, these foods help restore the protein balance within the trained muscles. A person should consume 0.4 to 0.5 grams of protein per pound of body weight.

**Sufficient Hydration**

Keeping hydrated during and after a workout is vital to muscle recovery. Some say that sweat is body fat crying, but it’s actually your body releasing fluids. It is just as important to replenish your body with fluids after a workout as it is during a workout. Drinking water prevents dehydration and flushes out harmful toxins.

References:

ACE: Don’t Be a Sore Loser – Dealing with Muscle Soreness <http://www.acefitness.org/acefit/healthy_living_fit_facts_content.aspx?itemid=2614>

Sleep Foundation: How Much Sleep Do We Really Need?

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/how-sleep-works/how-much-sleep-do-we-really-need>

McKinley Health Center: Nutrition for Optimal Exercise Recovery <http://www.mckinley.illinois.edu/handouts/nutrition_exercise_recover.html>

Tufts University: Building a High Quality Diet

<http://www.tufts.edu/med/nutrition-infection/hiv/health_high_quality_diet.html>

Mayo Clinic: Healthy Diet- Do you Follow Dietary Guidelines?

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/how-to-eat-healthy/MY02264>