



When you get injured and you cannot train to your full potential it's not uncommon to neglect your diet. Reducing your calorie intake through fear of weight gain or hitting the chocolate to replace the endorphins normally released by exercise is bad. A good, clean, nutritious diet is more important now, during the period of injury recovery, than training at your peak!

Caloric Intake

When injured, our body actually has an increase in energy demands. Resting metabolic rates are often 15 - 50% higher after a sports injury depending on the severity of the injury. Reducing caloric intake during these times can drastically delay healing. A good rule of thumb is make sure you are getting in 20% more calories than your resting metabolic rate. This is often less than when an athlete is training, but more than the sedentary baseline intake.

Omega-3 Fats

After the Acute Stage (1-3 days), it may be good to emphasize omega-3 intake and eliminate or drastically reduce omega-6. There is growing evidence that reducing omega-6 and including more omega-3 can be extremely beneficial in reducing inflammation and promoting wound healing. Omitting vegetable fats that are rich in omega-6, and increasing fish oil (or algae sources of omega-3 supplements) can dramatically help the healing process. A good goal early on in the inflammation process is to achieve a 3:1 to 1:1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats. Beyond the omega-6:omega-3 ratio, it has been shown that consuming monounsaturated fats (found in nuts, seeds, and olive oil) may also reduce inflammatory enzymes.

Protein

Protein needs are also elevated to allow the body to start forming new tissue. The current clinical recommendation for injured athletes is to get in 1 gram of protein per pound of lean body weight. It may also be beneficial to include an amino acid supplement containing glutamine and arginine, as these have shown to speed up the healing process in the body.

Glucose

Glucose is needed for wound healing but is less critical than the above nutrients. Ideally, eating unprocessed carbohydrates to achieve micronutrient intake and keep blood sugars level is all that is required. All phases of recovery will benefit from Vitamin A, C, Copper, and Zinc and should be prioritized in food choices during periods of injury. Foods that are often high in these micronutrients are also high in flavonoids (plant chemicals that often function as pigment in fruits and vegetables) that can lead to a more pronounced anti-inflammatory response. Look for dark fruits and vegetables to increase your flavonoid and micronutrient intake.

Herbal Supplements

Herbs can also be beneficial in managing inflammation and helping healing. Turmeric is a great addition to an athlete's diet during periods of injury, to control inflammation. Garlic has also been shown to be beneficial to in inhibiting inflammatory enzymes as well, although you may require a supplement to reach effective dosing.

Antioxidants

Natural antioxidants found in fruit, berries, vegetables, legumes, tea and nuts & seeds are essential in neutralising free radicals released by damage muscle tissue. Green tea, dark berries, broccoli, garlic and tomatoes are all know to contain high levels of antioxidants.