



Nutrition for Injury Recovery

- Nutrition is important in supporting on-field performance, and it also plays a role in healing and injury recovery
- Proper food provides the building blocks needed for cells to repair and grow, and the right food boosts messages sent through the body to promote healing
- Nutrition for injury recovery has a foundation in the normal high-quality training diet.
The main ideas of healthy eating don't change when you go down with an injury

Diet Tips

- *Eat enough calories for healing*
 - **MYTH:** An injured athlete isn't as active as they were pre-injury, so they should cut back on calorie intake
 - **TRUTH:** During the first 1-2 weeks after injury, your body actually uses more energy than normal to react to the injury, start the healing process, and build new tissue. Under-eating can actually *slow down* the body's immune response
 - It's natural to lose or gain a little bit (3-5 lbs) weight during rehab, but it's important to keep eating enough *so you don't lose the muscle mass you've worked hard to build up*
- *Eat healthy fats*
 - Omega-3 fatty acids in healthy fats have natural anti-inflammatory action, which controls inflammation during healing. Other healthy fats from foods like almonds, avocado, and olive oil can also help healing
 - Foods to eat: Salmon, canned tuna, walnuts, pumpkin seeds. You can also talk to your trainer about taking a fish oil pill (look for a 1 gm or 1000 mg dose)
- *Avoid "bad" fats*
 - While healthy fats like omega-3's promote healing, excess saturated fat and trans fat can delay healing and can also lead to excess weight gain
 - Diet tip: Try to minimize fast foods fried foods, and processed snack foods. If the drive-through is the only option, look for places with healthy choices like chicken sandwiches and rice & bean burritos. Make sure to go easy on the cheese, mayo, or sour cream.
- *Eat colorful foods*
 - Colorful foods are high in antioxidants, phytochemicals (special plant chemicals), and important vitamins & minerals that help healing
 - Foods to eat: Tomatoes, broccoli, spinach, oranges, red grapes, bell peppers, carrots
- *Stay hydrated*
 - Your body needs nutrients but also water as building blocks to repair tissue
 - General recommendation: About 100 oz per day for men, about 64 oz per day for women (includes drinks like low-fat milk, 100% fruit juice, or sports drinks)
- *Get Zinc*
 - Zinc is a particularly important nutrient in the body's repair process
 - Foods to eat: Lean meats, yogurt, beans, almonds, hummus, non-sugary fortified cereals

Best & Worst Foods for Injured Athletes

BEST	WORST
Salmon and tuna – high in omega-3 fatty acids	Alcohol has extra calories with no nutrients for healing, and excess consumption can slow down recovery and dehydrate you
Almonds and walnuts – high in healthy fats, minerals, and protein	High “bad” fat fast-food meals and snacks crowd out room for the important nutrients you need for recovery
Olive Oil and Canola Oil – high in omega-3 and other healthy fats	Very low fat diets miss out on the important healthy fats and fat-soluble vitamins needed for repair and recovery
Broccoli, Spinach, Tomatoes, and Sweet Potatoes, and other colorful vegetables – high in antioxidants and phytochemicals	
Apples, strawberries, mangos, oranges, red grapes, and other colorful fruits – high in antioxidants and phytochemicals	
Yogurt – good source of protein, probiotics, and zinc	
Lean meats – high in protein, zinc, and iron	
Beans – great lean protein, high in fiber, nutrient dense, good source of iron	