

Top 5 Recovery Snacks for Swimmers

By Chris Rosenbloom, PhD, RD, CSSD

A young swimmer asked me about after-practice recovery snacks, specifically if she needed a special product marketed as an “after” workout recovery drink. She didn’t really like the taste of the commercial product and wondered if there were good alternatives.

I admired her “food first” approach and suggested she try some of the recovery snacks listed below. A good recovery snack provides carbohydrate to replenish muscle glycogen and a small amount of protein to aid in repairing and strengthening muscles. Recovery nutrition is most important for swimmers who train daily or compete in several events over the course of a day(s) during a meet.

1. **Almond or peanut butter and fruit jam sandwich on whole grain bread.** If you are tired of peanut butter, try almond butter for a new taste. Almonds contain the antioxidant vitamin E and are a good source of protein. Mix the nut butter with quality carbs from the bread and fruit jam for a tasty recovery snack that needs no refrigeration.

2. **Vanilla-flavored Greek yogurt with low-fat granola cereal and berries.** Greek yogurt has more protein than regular yogurt (but slightly less calcium), and when paired with granola and berries it makes for a sweet treat that also provides healthy plant compounds (called phytonutrients) in berries.

3. **A cup of instant oatmeal with low-fat milk.** Oatmeal is a satisfying recovery snack that will keep you feeling full until your next meal, and if you have water and a microwave handy, it is hot and ready to eat in a few minutes. Pair it with a carton of low-fat milk to add protein.

4. **Pita bread pocket stuffed with Albacore or light chunk tuna.** The tuna in a pouch is less fishy tasting than canned tuna and comes in interesting flavors (try sundried tomato and olive oil or lemon pepper). Tuna is good source of the healthy “fish oils” called omega-3-fatty acids. Water packed tuna contains the heart healthy fats so you don’t need to buy the oil packed tuna to get the health benefits.

5. **Whole wheat mini-bagel with sliced turkey, cheddar cheese and sliced apple.** I love mini-bagels; each one has 100 calories and 25 grams of carbohydrate making a good recovery carb. Turkey is a lean protein, and a slice of cheddar cheese provides calcium and loads of flavor. Apple slices add crunch and pairs well with the turkey and cheese. Hard cheeses, like cheddar, have less lactose (milk sugar) than other cheeses, so a good for those with mild lactose intolerance.

All of these snacks provide carbohydrate and protein and have the added bonus of being nutrient-rich (meaning they provide needed nutrients for the calories). What is your favorite recovery snack? Send me your ideas via email for a future column!