

Arizona Dolphins-

A SWIMMER'S LIFESTYLE



Recovery

In a sport as rigorous as swimming, recovery is essential for the prevention of injuries, fatigue and sickness as well as just general performance. Most recovery is preemptive, meaning that its purpose is to PREVENT further damage or harm to the body. So, when a new training cycle starts (A.K.A SUMMER TRAINING), the swimmers will usually come home feeling extra tired or even have some stiffness. The stiffness that your swimmer feels is predominantly generated from high amounts of lactic acid in the muscles. [Well, what is lactic acid?](#) This is a chemical your body produces when your cells break down carbohydrates for energy. Lactic acid builds up in the muscles after rigorous exercise which can leave a burning sensation in the muscles when they are activated. While the sensation tends to subside pretty quickly after the set is complete, the after effects are what inhibit performance.

For example, if we were to do a squat circuit in dryland on Monday, within 15 minutes after the workout, all the swimmers would most likely say that their legs felt like “Jello”. Although this fatigue is considerable, the real discomfort only tends to set in about 1-2 days AFTER the workout. This is when the muscles begin to stiffen creating soreness during any movement. So, there is a DELAYED RESPONSE to how the body copes with certain forms of exercise.

So, what can we do to try and prevent muscle stiffness and pain from setting in?

Sleep

Research shows that getting **ATLEAST 8 hours** helps the body recover fast and keeps it healthy. But another important thing that comes with sleep is a routine. Make it a habit to go to bed at a certain time every night and wake up around the same time every morning. This will train the body to know when to recover and make it easier to recover.

Hydration

Many swimmers don't know that the body actually sweats while you're in the water. That means that the body can become dehydrated pretty quickly and a lot of swimmers don't notice it in time to replenish the body. Water is the best thing you can give your body, but sometimes it can be hard to drink water and have the taste of chlorine in your mouth. Drinking some sort of electrolyte drink can accommodate for that. Coconut water mixed with basic fruit juice provides the body with simple sugars for a tough workout while replenishing electrolytes along the way.

Stretching

There two types of stretching: Dynamic and Static. Dynamic Stretching is active stretching that utilizes movement to warm up the body before practice, which assists with blood flow and releasing excess lactic acid buildup from previous training sessions. Static stretching is best used when the body is at rest. This type of stretching is a form of cooling down because it elongates the muscles.

Power naps

Many teams have double practices during the day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, giving swimmers only a few hours to rest in between. The perfect thing to do before practice is to fit in a little power nap. These naps usually range from 25 minutes to one hour. Everybody responds to naps very differently so try different lengths of naps to see what works for you.

Warming Down

Cooling down is a form of active recovery, which releases tension and gets the blood flowing through the body again. Make sure after every practice, whether it was a sprinting day or a long-distance day, to get in at least a 400 free in to cool down the body and allow it to recover.

Fueling the Body

What most people don't know is that you need to get something in your body right after or within thirty minutes after practice. The most common thing to have after practice is a protein drink, but it is not the only recovery snack to have. Any fruit or greek yogurt of your choice are great ways to replenish the body after practice, before you head home for dinner.

Massages

Having a sports massage can help relieve any tension in the body (particularly certain spots of tightness) and assist in blood circulation, just like active recovery. Try getting a sports massage at least once a month and you will feel great during your practice, and even your races.

Ice baths

Ice baths are used after a tough workout and have great benefits to the body. They help speed up recovery, alleviate muscle pain, stiffness, and soreness, and even repairs muscles. If you can, put a bucket of ice in your bathtub, run a cold bath, and lay in there for 10 minutes.

Compression clothing

Compression clothing is the latest wear for swimmers. Many other sports wear this particular clothing because it is believed to help lower the heart rate. While there's still some conflicting research on the subject, the clothing is believed to be most effective when worn for recovery between prelims and finals at swim meets, which can potentially increase your overall performance.

Foam rolling

Foam rolling is like a sports massage, but you can do it yourself. Rolling over knots that may have developed during practice or dryland may release them, but also bring circulation back to that spot as well as increase your range of motion. Try to foam roll either before or after practice, or both for the maximum effect.