

Taking Care Of Your Inner Olympian

The Olympics are just around the corner and if you are like me, you will be glued to the TV watching our best athletes compete against the best in the world. One thing that I do that may be different than you is that I watch for what the medical staff is doing during timeouts or when someone is injured during competition. These athletes are performing at world class levels and the medical attention they receive is also world class. I like to watch and see if I can pick up any new idea for treatment of sport injuries. I firmly believe that you don't have to be a world class athlete to get world class treatment.

As a therapist who has worked with Olympic athletes I have employed many strategies to help these elite athletes recover from workouts, prevent injuries and prepare for competition.



1. Use cold to recover – whether it is a **10 min ice bath** or a **frozen bag of peas**, using cold to help recover from a workout or to minimize swelling in chronic injuries is something all active people can benefit from.

2. Recovery nutrition - it is a common sight when watching sports to see athletes with a water bottle after their event. It is usually more than water in the bottles. Post workout recovery can begin right after your workout with a combined carbohydrate - **protein mixture with an optimal 2-1 ratio of carbs to protein**. The best window for this liquid meal is 15 minutes after you finish. A more complete recovery meal should be added within an hour after that for best results

3. Warm Up & Cool Down - Cooling down simply **means slowing down (not stopping completely)** after exercise. Continuing to move around at a very low intensity for 5 to 10 minutes after a workout helps remove lactic acid from your muscles and may reduce muscles stiffness. Warming up with a comprehensive routine that includes functional movement will help get your body ready for higher level activity.

4. Flexibility - stretching has always been a part of sport and injury prevention but the latest research in flexibility has challenged the standard ideas towards stretching. Most athletes combine stretching with very involved warm up routines. Yoga has also increased in popularity with elite athletes. Personally I have found that for specific flexibility work **“Yin” Yoga** can be very effective. Don't expect changes overnight, new research has suggested that the best results are found when a flexibility routine is adhered to **daily for at least 4 to 6 weeks!**

5. More Sleep -. While you sleep, amazing things are taking place in your body. Optimal sleep is essential for anyone who exercises regularly. During sleep, your body produces hormones which are responsible for tissue growth and repair. Research in this area continues to tell us that with **adequate sleep (7 – 9 hours)** many illnesses can be minimized or avoided

Remember while you are watching the Olympics, the athletes are training full time and working on recovery constantly. They have a sport medicine team at their beck and call. Although the rest of us are not full time athletes and have the added stress of work and family, we can steal some of the ideas and strategies elite athletes employ and make them work for us as we strive to be active and pain free on our journey to reach our personal best!

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