



RUNNING THIS LINE WILL SAVE LIVES

How to recover from a long mountain race

Immediately after you finish the race, feel free to collapse in a heap (if you must) as this is a natural instinct for the many runners who like nothing worse than leaving anything out there. Once back on your feet, stay there for a while and try to avoid sitting. Walk around easily, have some water and recovery food.

Drinks that contain basic proteins or amino acids, carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and electrolytes are practical and quick ways to replenish yourself but you can, of course, achieve the same, or even better, results if you have left fresh fruit or other natural products ready for yourself. Not everyone likes cold meat or a boiled egg shortly after a race, so I leave that choice up to you. Whatever you get into yourself, eat and drink it within 20 minutes of finishing and then ensure you get a good hearty meal over the course of the next 2 hours and follow this up with another varied meal in the evening.

While you are enjoying the post-race banter, try not to sit down for prolonged periods of time. Walk around easily, do some easy dynamic movements and get up every 15-20 minutes if you do have to sit down. Stiffness will only really settle if you let it, and sitting is the worst culprit for making it worse. The more you follow this advice, the quicker you'll feel like running fast again.

If you are excessively hungry in the 48-72 hours after the race, keep stocking up on healthy carbohydrates such as salads, vegetables and starches and plenty of lean meat as well as a mixture of fats. You will not necessarily have to binge, but don't be afraid to eat more than usual especially if you feel unusually fatigued. Ignore the usual advice for excessive eating of pasta, rice, cereals and bread. Certainly, if you enjoy it, go ahead and eat some, but if performance and recovery is what you care about, then none of these food types has anything to offer that more natural foods will not provide for much better.

I preach active recovery at all times. You are often told to "rest for two to six weeks" when you have an excessive soreness, niggles or full-blown injuries. This is no surprise as any tissue damage will heal itself within that period of time. Chronic pains that don't heal in this period and that keep reappearing are a warning sign that something is wrong with the way you move. Think of it as hearing a strange sound when you're driving your car. If you don't find out why the sound occurs, sooner or later something goes badly wrong and the car will crash. Prevent this by fitting in as many small every day physical activities as you can such as walking, light running and cross-training by practicing natural movements such as jumping, swimming and climbing. Go out of your way to make your life a bit inconvenient by avoiding the lift or walking to the shop and avoid isolated resistance training, static stretching and seated gym-work which will just make you stiffer than you were before or, best case, will just make you better at sitting down.