

What to Eat for a Faster Recovery

By [Liz Applegate](#), Ph.D. • *Runner's World*

Most runners [get injured at least once](#) in their running careers. Whether it's a sore tendon or sudden muscle pull, your body goes through a series of responses to start healing itself. Research shows that what you eat while recovering can actually help you get back on your feet sooner rather than later. Here's how to adjust your diet.

YOU NEED CALORIES

Skimping on fuel will slow down the healing process: Even though you're not running and are less active, your metabolism goes up after an injury. That's because your body has to burn calories to build new tissue to repair muscles and tendons.

Healing Fix: Don't skip meals. Eat at least every five hours to [keep up your energy](#). Weigh yourself weekly to make sure you're at a healthy weight.

YOU NEED PROTEIN

Postinjury your body breaks down more protein than it can make, causing the injured muscle to atrophy. Not eating enough protein can make matters worse. The amino acid leucine (a protein building block) may help prevent some of the protein loss common with injuries.

Healing Fix: Add quality protein to every meal. The best sources include eggs, chicken, lean beef, pork, seafood, soy, and low-fat dairy. Aim for a total of 60 to 90 grams daily.

YOU NEED OMEGA-3S

These essential fats are good for joint and heart health, but when you're injured, they may also suppress inflammation that can hamper the healing process. Studies also show that getting more omega-3s in your diet may help decrease muscle atrophy.

Healing Fix: Eat at least two servings of omega-3-rich seafood, like salmon, a week. Add walnuts and flaxseed meal or oil to smoothies. Buy eggs enriched with omega-3s.

YOU NEED VITAMIN D

Vitamin D plays a key role in rebuilding bone after a stress or regular fracture. Since your body naturally produces it when exposed to sunlight, your circulating levels drop during the winter months, making it crucial to add this nutrient to your diet.

Healing Fix: Boost your intake of [vitamin-D rich foods](#), including canned salmon and milk. Make sure your yogurt is fortified. Consider taking a supplement with 1,000 to 2,000 IU of vitamin D daily.

YOU NEED QUERCETIN

This polyphenol compound acts as a potent antioxidant, and studies show that a steady intake of foods rich in quercetin can help lower markers of inflammatory response following muscle damage.

Healing Fix: Add quercetin-rich blueberries to oatmeal; top salads with red and white onion. Snack on apples, and eat kale with dinner.

Less Is More

Cut back on these to help speed your recovery:

ALCOHOL

Studies show that consuming alcohol after an injury reduces your muscles' protein-building ability, leading to more severe muscle atrophy.

SUGAR

While healing from an injury, your body isn't as efficient at processing sugary carbs, which may raise circulating levels of fat in your blood.

FRIED AND FATTY SNACKS

These foods contain oils high in omega-6 fatty acids (which can increase inflammation) and few omega-3s, which help with healing.