

## ***Recovery in Football***

Preparation for a 5 a side football tournament is obviously very important but what should we do between games to help stay at our best throughout the day?

Staying hydrated is critical to your performance and, more importantly, for preventing heat-related illnesses. Dehydration in athletes may lead to fatigue, decreased coordination, and muscle cramping. Other heat-related illnesses, such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke have even more serious consequences. You need to pay attention to what and how much you're drinking before, during and after exercise.

As a rough guide, in terms of volume of fluids you should be drinking about 120 to 180ml of fluid for every 20 mins of exercise and if sprinting as in a game of football then a little more, around 180 to 240ml for every 20 mins.

This fluid should not only be water. It needs to be a combination of water and sports drinks or rehydration salts/tablets mixed with water.

Post exercise rehydration should be about 500 to 700ml of water for every half kilo lost during the days activities. A good way to check hydration is by the colour of your urine. If it is dark yellow keep putting those fluids in.

Ice baths after games are also a great way to aid recovery. There is not much research done yet on the scientific benefits of ice baths but anecdotal evidence from athletes is nearly always positive. The only negative comments are that the baths are too cold and the cold hurts the feet in particular. This can be stopped by wearing scuba diving booties, so that longer immersion times can be achieved.

Ice baths are best at between 10-15 degrees Celsius and immersion times can vary from 5 to 20 minutes. Between games in a tournament I would recommend two separate 5 minute immersions with the time between immersions spent lying on your back with your legs up in the air resting against a wall so as to let them drain.

Fueling the body with food is also important. During activity, recent studies recommend a mix of carbohydrates and protein in the ratio of 4:1. There are plenty of powder products on the market out there that you can buy that you can mix into water to give you this ratio. I would also recommend two nights before eating meals heavier in protein and then the night before eating more carbohydrates. For breakfast the day of the tournament, eat normally. Don't over-eat just because you have a few games to play. Between games snack on sweets or bananas to keep energy levels up if you cant find the 4:1 mix I talked about above.

If you combine the three measures above you can keep the effects of fatigue and dehydration to a minimum and continue to play your best throughout the day, giving you an advantage come finals time.