



Flavored Milk: The Perfect Recipe to Refuel

World-renowned sports nutritionist says, "Just drink it."

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To rehydrate and refuel after intense exercise, it doesn't get any better than flavored milk. According to Nancy Clark, MS, RD, internationally-known board certified specialist in sports dietetics and author of "Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook," flavored milk has what it takes to help athletes recover: carbohydrate to refuel muscles, high quality protein to build and repair muscles, water to replace fluid losses, sodium for fluid absorption and retention, and calcium for bone health.

"Most people grab a sports drink thinking it's designed for recovery, but that's not true," says Clark. "Sports drinks are designed to replenish fluids during extended exercise." What's needed after exercise is carbohydrate, protein, fluids and sodium—exactly what flavored milk has. "I recommend athletes drink it," says Clark, "and they love it. It's a treat for athletes, especially for teenage girls who are fussy with food likes and dislikes."

Due to the added sugar, flavored milk also boasts the optimal carbohydrate to protein ratio to help muscles recover and refuel: three times more carbohydrate than protein. Clark says the optimal carbohydrate to protein ratio also can be accomplished with white milk and a banana, white milk and graham crackers, or white milk and cereal.

According to a small number of studies in young men, drinking chocolate milk after an initial bout of intense exercise improved performance during a subsequent bout of intense exercise. A recent research review on the use of recovery beverages after aerobic activities published in the "Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research" found that chocolate milk was as effective as, or superior to, commercial recovery beverages in promoting recovery.

Over the past several years, a key research priority for the Dairy Research Institute of Dairy Management, Inc. has been increasing understanding of how chocolate milk helps the body rehydrate, refuel and rebuild after a workout.

Although the research on refueling with flavored milk is preliminary, Clark says she feels very comfortable recommending it as a recovery beverage for people of all ages. "Dairy is important in the diet," says Clark. "To package fat-free or low-fat flavored milk so that people see it as a performance food legitimizes it."

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