



## ROYAL AIR FORCE TRIATHLON ASSOCIATION

RAFTri/Triangles

Frank Whittle, 2005

### THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE RECOVERY

The need for balance in life is undeniable. For every high, there must be a low. For every fast workout, a slow one must soon follow. When at a peak and feeling invincible, you are only one training mistake from losing it all. Failure to maintain a balance, especially by short changing recovery, will nearly always result in a breakdown that interrupts training and brings a loss of fitness.

So, if you are feeling tired and sluggish, can't concentrate or sleep, have an increased thirst, seem to be getting more injuries and have poor performances in races then you could be overtraining. If you over train, your performances WILL suffer! Don't be a slave to your training plan. Be flexible, adapt your program as you need to ensure you recover and cope. This may mean doing less training at a lower intensity, or having more rest or easy days between sessions.

Most of the following recovery techniques aid recovery by slightly increasing the heart rate, increasing blood flow to the muscles, accelerating the inflow of nutrients, reducing soreness, lowering blood pressure and relaxing the nervous system.

#### Hot shower or bath

Immediately following your cool down and recovery drink, take a hot shower or bath for 10 to 15 minutes. Don't linger though, especially in the bath, as you can dehydrate even more.

#### Active recovery

For the experienced triathlete, one of the best recovery methods is to jog, pedal or swim really easily for 15 to 20 minutes several hours after the workout and before going to bed. The intensity of this session should be extremely light with a relaxed, low heart rate.

#### Massage

Other than sleep, most triathletes find a massage by a professional sports massage therapist is the most effective form of recovery. A post-race massage should employ long, flushing strokes to speed the removal of waste products and increase the supply of nutrients to the body. Deep tissue massage at this time is not recommended as it may actually increase muscle trauma, however after 36 – 48 hours, the therapist may apply deeper specific pressure. Due to the expense of massage, most athletes prefer self-massage. Following a hot bath or shower, stroke the muscles for about 20 minutes working away from the extremities and toward the heart.

#### Sauna

Several hours following a race or a hard training session you may find that a dry sauna speeds recovery. Do not use a steam room for recovery, as this will have the opposite effect. Stay in the sauna for about 10 minutes and start rehydrating as soon as you finish in the sauna.



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#### Relax and stretch

Be lazy! For several hours after a hard session or a race, just be lazy. Your body needs quality rest. Try to stay off your feet as much as possible. Whenever you have the opportunity, have a sit down. Even better, lay down. Get on the floor and elevate your feet against a wall or some furniture. After that, sit on the floor and gently stretch. Overused muscles tighten and just don't seem to relax on their own. This is best done right after a hot bath or sauna, and just before going to bed.

#### Go for a walk

A few hours after your hard session or race, go for a nice slow walk in the park or the forest (if you have nearby!). For some strange reason the abundance of oxygen and the aroma of grass, trees and flowers are very soothing.

These are just a few ideas that may help you recover after a hard session or a race. If you take anything from this article, let it be the importance of recovery. As I mentioned earlier, if you over-train, your performances WILL suffer! This is not just an idea of mine, it is FACT. Plan recovery sessions into your training program and please don't be afraid to change your training program as you need to. If you need a day off, have a day off. It's as easy as that!