

Chocolate milk gives athletes leg-up after exercise: study

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(Medical Xpress) -- Not only does chocolate milk taste good, but two recent studies from The University of Texas at Austin show that it's also the ideal post-workout recovery drink.

"Serious and amateur [athletes](#) alike enjoyed physical recovery benefits when they drank low-fat [chocolate milk](#) after a vigorous workout," said Dr. John Ivy, lead researcher on the studies and chair of The University of Texas at Austin College of Education's Department of Kinesiology and Health Education. "The advantages for the study participants were better body composition in the form of more muscle and less fat, improved times while working out and overall better physical shape than peers who consumed sports beverages that just contained carbohydrates."

Ivy is a nationally renowned sports nutrition expert who established the importance of post-exercise nutrition to athletes' physical performance and recovery, as well as the timing of nutrition intake, and authored the groundbreaking book "Nutrient Timing."

In his two recent, related studies, Ivy and his research team compared the recovery benefits of drinking low-fat chocolate milk after [exercise](#) to the effects of a carbohydrate beverage with the same ingredients and calories as typical sports drinks as well as to a calorie-free beverage.

After riding a bike for 90 minutes at moderate intensity, then for 10 minutes of high intensity intervals, 10 trained cyclists had significantly

more power and rode faster (reduced their ride time by an average of six minutes) when they consumed low-fat chocolate milk rather than a carbohydrate sports drink or calorie-free beverage.

Compared to the other recovery drinks, chocolate milk drinkers had twice the improvement in maximal oxygen uptake after four and a half weeks of cycling, which included intense exercise five days a week, with each exercise session followed by one of the three recovery beverages. Maximal oxygen uptake is one indicator of an athlete's aerobic endurance and ability to perform sustained exercise. The study included 32 healthy, amateur male and female cyclists.

Ivy's research also revealed that low-fat chocolate milk drinkers built more muscle and shaved off more fat during training, ending up with a three-pound lean muscle advantage after four and a half weeks of training as compared to study participants who consumed a carbohydrate drink. This study also included 32 healthy, amateur male and female cyclists who rode for one hour, five days a week, and drank one of the three recovery beverages immediately following and one hour after the bout of exercise.

"We don't yet understand exactly what mechanism is causing low-fat chocolate milk to give athletes these advantages — that will take more research," said Ivy, "but there's something in the naturally-occurring protein and carbohydrate mix that offers significant benefits."

Ivy notes that a three-minute recovery window after exercise, for people of all fitness levels, is as important as the nutrition supplement that's consumed.

Provided by University of Texas at Austin

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