

Natural Pain Relief for Athletes

Being an athlete can take quite a toll on the body, even with a great diet. Over weeks of training I've found that even on the best diet, I'm bound to run into injuries and soreness. That being said there are several things that make a big difference in how I feel the next day and rather or not I'm able to train the next day.

Currently, I'm training for a Brazilian Jiu-jitsu competition in May. I'm new, and my workload isn't nearly that of a seasoned professional athlete, but for the average person, it's intense.

Every day I do a full body weight lifting workout, yoga, stretching and breath control, 100 bodyweight squats, three sets of push-ups and pull-ups, drilling and training with my dad for about 20 minutes, a mile run, and training at the gym for 3-4 hours a day.

Most injuries I get heal quickly. Since starting Brazilian jiu-jitsu I've suffered jammed toes, a bruised trachea, a pulled quad muscle, and most recently a pulled muscle in my rib area near my spine. Every other injury has been quick to heal, gone in three days at the most. My rib injury took longer to heal. Even after it got better, I spent weeks being sore in that area and having to pay special attention not to reinjure it.

I've got a competition soon so extended time off isn't an option, nor is any sort of pain management that would slow my healing long term. I don't take pain medication of any sort, nor do I use recreational pain relief like cannabis. Cannabis and over-the-counter pain relief, as well as prescription pain medication all slow down the healing process exponentially for

temporary relief.

I view my pain (and many other things in life) like a credit card. Using medication to relieve pain temporarily means dealing with a longer lasting injury, and more pain in the long run. For instance, if I have an injury that hurts at a 6 out of 10, I can smoke some weed or take some other pain medication. But once it wears off that 6 becomes a 7, maybe an 8. And of course, the next dose of pain relief won't be as effective unless you up the dosage. That's not my idea of a desirable feedback loop.

To promote healing, we do hot-cold compresses switching back and forth to attract blood flow and inflammation for healing. In the end, we use lots of deep tissue oil on the area. Deep tissue repair oil is my number one recommendation for pain relief and healing if you're only going to use one thing to aid in the healing process. I use it multiple times a day when I feel sore and before or after a workout. Deep tissue oil has menthol crystals, cayenne, wintergreen oil, and other things to promote healing and attract blood flow to the target area.

I also do hot epsom salt baths as often as needed. It's nothing revolutionary, but epsom salt does help release tension, relax the muscles and prevent soreness.

Many people recommend Boswellia, an herbal extract, to help with inflammation and pain. Although I've never used it, you can read more about it and its benefits in this article.

I stretch and do yoga every day to work on flexibility and aid in healing as well. Even if I'm injured to the point of being unable to workout, I still stretch for movement and healing.

Many other athletes have done down similar paths of using natural remedies to help heal, but very few go deep enough to get the full benefits. Acupuncture and chiropractic care are two examples of holistic routes that some people go down, but as great as they are, they're really only temporary pain

relief. Acupuncture and chiropractic work can be great aids for the body in addition to a healthy diet and routine, but they don't fix any problems on their own.

Diet

Without a healthy diet, I wouldn't be able to do this every day, but I've learned that there's a difference between fueling my body for everyday life, and my diet when I'm training. When I'm training, I eat a high caloric diet with lots of protein. My main sources of protein are eggs, meat, and cheese. I generally eat less than a pound of meat a week. I have a little bacon in every salad, and between one and three nights a week, we'll have sausage or bacon in dinner. I also eat homemade beef jerky for protein in between classes.

Eating an anti-inflammatory diet is probably the most important part of my healing process because it goes beyond just healing. My diet is even more strict than it was prior to fighting, although prior to fighting I ate better than almost anyone I knew. I have to eat a diet that not only aids in healing but prevents me from getting injured frequently. With the right diet, you can make your body impervious to injury. I don't sit around and wait for an injury to start eating a diet that promotes healing.

Every day I eat a large salad with lots of different vegetables. Diversity is an extremely important part of a healthy diet that many people are missing. There are lots of professional athletes who have figured out that a healthy diet allows them to perform radically better, along with recovering faster and overall feeling better. That being said, not many people have figured out that there's a big difference between eating some kale salad and eating a 10-cup salad with kale, collards, rainbow chard, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, and more. My salads have at least 10 different vegetables and herbs in them. This article goes into how I make my salads and

cranberry lemonade.

Three to four times a week I drink my “anti-inflammatory smoothie”. I make it with an abundance of anti-inflammatory foods like ginger, pineapple, cranberries, tart cherries, and turmeric (to name a few). I drink lots of cranberry lemonade to flush out toxins and inflammation, as well as stay hydrated. Lastly, I obviously avoid inflammatory foods. I limit my grains and avoid corn (although occasionally we make homemade tortillas). I don't even eat oatmeal anymore, because it's too similar to gluten in the way it digests and causes inflammation.

Many fighters and bodybuilders eat lots of oatmeal as a good source of protein and fuel. For many people, it's great. But, like most other grains, it's inflammatory. I feel it when I eat them. I'll bet if you're paying attention, you can too. When I'm in need of protein and fuel I stick to things like eggs, homemade beef jerky, walnuts, chia seeds, and raw sheep's cheese.

It seems like the list of foods I can't eat is extremely long, but the list of foods I can and do eat is even longer. The guidelines are pretty simple, make everything from scratch, eat tons of raw veggies, eat tons of cooked veggies, and avoid any and all things processed.

Supplements

With a healthy diet the average person shouldn't need to take supplements everyday when they're healthy, but someone who's pushing their body on an athletes level may find that they function better with supplements.

Currently, I take Sf722 every day, generally because I eat a lot of fruit. Sf722 also helps pump my body full of good stuff similar to salads. Without Sf722 my skin can be prone to breaking out from rolls on the mats, and my healing and

recovery slows. I also take Abzorb, or other enzymes to help with digestion, especially if I eat pasteurized nuts. I take vitamin D, Vitamin B, and thyroid and/or pituitary glandular supplements to prevent endocrine system crashes.

When you've taken antibiotics or medication or done anything to eradicate your gut microbiome, your gut isn't producing enough vitamin B. This can be one of the last things to correct itself after you're healthy. Taking vitamin B helps heal your gut and helps the endocrine system by providing your body with vitamins that your gut should be producing.

When you're overweight, even just a small amount your body has a hard time assimilating vitamin D from the sun. not to mention most of us don't get enough sunlight anyways. Being overweight also leads to extra stress on the kidneys (and lower back) and the endocrine system.

Sleep

Diet and sleep are equally as important for overall health, and when it comes to how sore I am and my recovery time for an injury. Unfortunately, it can be hard to get a good night's sleep when my injury is severe enough, but it's always a top priority.

I always get a minimum of 8 hours of sleep. Regardless of the quality of sleep, I'm in bed trying to sleep for at least 8 hours. Sometimes depending on the workout the day before, or how an injury is healing, I can get more than 10 hours of sleep.

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Training

While training anything contact or combat related it's extremely important that you learn how to protect yourself from injury while drilling and rolling. It took me way too long to learn how to fall properly in jiu-jitsu, and it's still a work in progress. Falling down wrong was the number one cause of injury for me while training.

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That being said, once I learned how to protect myself from injury I found that training was actually extremely important for healing my most recent injury. So, if you can move, move. Staying active and using your body is extremely important for working your muscles and building them back stronger after an injury.

Generally, I use the rule use it or lose it. Broken bones often don't need casts (and strong healthy bones are harder to break). Staying active is usually your best bet for healing quickly.

Conclusion

Some days I wake up barely able to move! Training this hard has been really intense, but I know that with the way I do things, my recovery time is radically faster than anyone else I know doing the same thing as me.

In my experience the most important thing to do is to be in tune with your body to an extreme. The moment something isn't right I can tell, and I can feel a difference in the way certain foods fuel my body. I track my sleep and my diet, and when things aren't working the way they should I back track and examine where I might have gone wrong.

This takes time, and it takes mistakes. I've experimented with

lots of different foods and routines and I've seen how certain things make me feel, and how they effect my performance. Working out and being active is a wonderful thing, but it doesn't mean much if you're not healthy enough to sustain it.