



Recovery is fast becoming the hot new topic as we see everyone from professional athletes to weekend warriors trying to gain any possible edge. We have well-established evidence to show that recovering faster means fresher muscles for the next workout, and that translates to more effective training sessions and overall better fitness. There are a few new foods garnering attention that fit The Core Diet Recovery protocols. Highlights on superfoods come and go in the nutrition world, and we at The Core Diet like to dig around for supporting research before jumping onboard with the *new* shooting star. Tart Cherry Juice is one super star that has emerged recently in the world of endurance.

We have found many studies involving tart cherries and their impact on recovery, pain reduction and sleep, more than what I bargained for! Tart cherries have been shown to lessen pain and accelerate strength recovery after exercise, and most studies point to a speedier recovery. In one study, runners given cherry juice experienced three times less pain during and after the race than a control group given a placebo. Another study gave runners 16 ounces of cherry juice in the days leading up to and immediately following a marathon. These participants experienced less soreness, muscle damage, inflammation and recovered faster.

How much cherry juice do you need? There seems to be a little variability on timing and dosage, but most recommendations fall between 8-12 ounces, 1-2 times daily. As a freebie bonus, tart cherries are a good source of melatonin, a hormone that help us fall asleep. Consuming this before important events may help us to get important rest leading up to race day, as well.

What's the down side? Reported side effects included some mild gastrointestinal discomfort. Researchers proposed that high dosages may be harmful to the kidneys, but no more than with any high dose of any anti-inflammatory.

So...worth it? Absolutely.

We've started to include tart cherries and tart cherry juice in our recommendations on recovery protocols. Our partner, Juice Performer, just released Cherry Performer, 100% tart cherry juice, which is a great complement to their Beet Performer pre-workout beet juices. Chock full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory polyphenol compounds, you can include tart cherries in smoothies or just drink the juice straight up! Tart cherries are typically sold frozen, dried or juiced as opposed to sweet cherries that are eaten fresh.

And, if that wasn't enough, tart cherries were found to improve blood pressure, short and long term memory and verbal fluency! Just think, with all these value-added health benefits, you'll be able to articulate how great you feel as run by the other athletes!

Anne Rollins MS CSSD RD LDN is a sports dietitian for The Core Diet, USAT Coach and owner of embodyFitness Wellness Center in Burlington, Massachusetts.