Muscle damage is a highly common injury and can range from the soreness you feel after a training session through to a severe muscle tear which can take weeks to heal. An optimal diet can help the repair of muscle damage along, allowing the healing process to be as efficient as possible.

**Optimal Nutrition = Quicker Recovery Time**

**Consider: Energy**

The process of your body repairing muscle tissue requires energy and so needs to be considered in your diet. It may sound crazy, but during a period where your activity levels are lower, you may need just as much or even more calories in your diet than normal in order to help facilitate recovery. Make sure your calorie intake adds up or you risk slowing down or compromising the healing process. Good sources of dietary energy are wholegrain carbohydrate foods.

When muscle damage occurs there is a rise in cells called ‘free-radicals’ which disrupt our immune system and are responsible for excessive inflammation which slows down the healing process. Increasing anti-oxidant intake in your diet (Vitamin C and E) may work towards removing free radicals. The quicker inflammation is removed, the quicker those red blood cells can get to work and repair the damaged tissue. Anti-oxidants are widely available in many citrus fruits and vegetables or could be taken from a trusted supplement.

**Consider: Antioxidants**

Increasing the amount of protein during injury may be necessary. It is the key nutrient for growth and repair of muscle tissue in the body – a lack of it means a slower, less effective recovery. Increased protein will also reduce the amount of muscle lost due to inactivity when out with an injury.

Ensure a steady, constant supply of protein through the day by having a portion at each meal and snacking on protein containing foods. Lean meat, fish, eggs, beans and low fat dairy are great sources.

**Consider: Protein**
Nutrition for Rehabilitation: Muscle Injury
A guide to optimal nutrition to support the recovery process

Consider: Vitamin A

During recovery from a muscle injury Vitamin A should be a key consideration. It helps reduce early inflammation, stimulates white blood cell production needed for immunity (which stops when we get injured) and helps with muscle cell repair.

Foods such as eggs, oily fish, liver, milk and dairy products contain good amounts of vitamin A. In addition we can get it from plant sources in the form of Beta Carotene such as carrots, spinach, sweet potatoes, apricots and mango. Some fortified breakfast cereals also contain good amounts of Vitamin A.

Iron works to create haemoglobin which carries oxygen in red blood cells and sufficient amounts allows all cells involved in the healing process to work more efficiently. It is found in lean red meat, chicken and turkey, oily fish, green leafy vegetables such as kale and spinach, beans and pulses and fortified foods such as some breakfast cereals.

Consider: Iron

In combination with Vitamin C both Zinc and Copper help in the strengthening of connective tissue and also support adequate blood flow to an injured site in the body.

Zinc and copper rich foods include seafood, liver, sesame seeds, cashew nuts, wholegrains cereals and green leafy vegetables such as kale.

Consider: Zinc & Copper

TOP TIP!

Whilst recovering from an injury make the most of the time you have by implementing dietary changes, to make the overall time away from riding as little as possible.

Book in to see one of the PJA Nutrition Team on how you can implement these changes in to your daily routine.

A diet plan can be created to help your recovery and maintain a sensible weight.

BE AWARE!

Although not always promoted by the PJA Nutrition Team, studies have shown during recovery from injury a vitamin and mineral supplement may be beneficial alongside a regular diet to optimise the amount of minerals in the diet, and promote the recovery process.

Speak to one of the PJA Nutrition Team for advice on a safe multi-vitamin supplement.