MEDIA RELEASE

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Protein crucial for team sport players, says world- first study

Consuming protein drinks in combination with certain types of exercise can rapidly promote muscle recovery and regeneration according to a world-first study conducted by Australian and Swiss researchers.

The study, which was published recently in the European Journal of Applied Physiology and conducted by RMIT University in Melbourne, McMaster University in Canada and the Nestlé Research Center in Switzerland, was the first of its kind to look at the effects of protein for recovery after high intensity sprint exercise, which is fundamental to team sports and interval training. Previous research had only focused on the impact of protein supplementation on strength and endurance training.

Principal Researcher, Dr Vernon Coffey from RMIT's Exercise Metabolism Group said the participants – all team sport players - were given a protein supplement just before a series of high intensity cycling sprints at RMIT's laboratory.

Muscle biopsies and blood tests were taken and analysed before the exercise session and up to four hours afterwards. Results showed that when the group consumed a protein supplement before exercise they experienced a 50 per cent greater increase in muscle recovery and regeneration, than when they were given a placebo drink.

"We were definitely surprised by the results," said Dr Coffey. "We didn't expect the protein supplement to increase muscle building capacity to the extent that it did."

Dr Trent Stellingwerff, scientist from the Nestlé Research Center, said the research group tried to mimic the sprint patterns of people who played in team sports such as AFL and Rugby League.

"Team sports are huge in Australia and to date there's been no research on the role of protein on this type of exercise," said Dr Stellingwerff.

"I work with athletes all the time and they pour their heart and soul into training but they don't think that much about their recovery after exercise," he said.

Dr Stellingwerff said the impact of the study's results could go far beyond the elite athlete.

"The results from this study can potentially benefit those who play in a wide range of team sports such as football, rugby, netball and hockey and even impact those people who go to the gym and take part in spin classes," he said.

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