

Safety and Education
Vol. 34/23
Don't Do This

What Not to Do After a Ride, According to Experts

AVOID DERAILING ALL THE HARD WORK YOU PUT INTO YOUR WORKOUT BY SKIPPING THESE POSTWORKOUT STEPS.

By Molly Hurford / Published Aug 24, 2023 / [Bicycling.com](https://www.bicycling.com)



INTRODUCTION

After your workout, you're [tired](#). You're maybe a little [stiff](#), maybe a little [hungry](#), maybe a little tight on time before your next meeting. Doing much of anything post workout can seem almost impossible for those balancing jobs and family on top of training. But there are a few things that can make a big difference to your health and your performance if you set aside just a few minutes after you hop off the bike to take care of yourself.

Of course, there are all the things you know you *should* do, like those [mobility stretches](#) your physical therapist suggested or those five minutes of [foam rolling](#) you know will make your [muscles](#) feel better. But what are the non-negotiables that you *shouldn't* be doing? We got experts to explain what not to do after a ride so you feel your best throughout the day and perform at your peak the next time you start pedaling.

7 Things Not to Do After Your Next Ride

1. *Anything* in Your Cycling Kit

Seriously, get out of that those shorts or bibs. We cannot stress this one enough. “Definitely one of the worst things you can do is hang around in your chamois,” says former professional mountain biker and coach, [Viviane Favery](#). This can lead to an increased risk of [saddle sores](#) or other unpleasant rashes and infections—and it’s not exactly pleasant for your friends to be around, especially if you’re a heavy sweater. (No one wants to have to fumigate their car after driving you home from the [group ride](#)!)

2. Staying Dirty

We know, the temptation to check your email and answer a few people is strong. But resist the urge and take a few minutes to get cleaned up before you get back to work. This ideally looks like a shower where you can wash off the [sunscreen](#), bug spray, [chamois cream](#), chain grease, et cetera—but if you’re tight for time or changing at the office, use a baby wipe or a face cloth to at least clean your face, pits, and nether regions before getting dressed.

3. Skipping Your Next Meal

We know that if you work a traditional 9-to-5 gig, [early morning rides](#) are often rushed affairs that end with you running out the door without grabbing so much as a cereal bar. Similarly, most of us don’t get a two hour lunch break, so fitting in a quick ride is usually all you have time for before you need to be back at your [desk](#).

But even if you’re tight on time, you still need to eat something—ideally a [protein](#) and [carbohydrate-based snack](#) or meal—within 90 minutes of your workout, says Novak. Otherwise, your body won’t be quick to recover for tomorrow’s ride.

4. Conversely, Eating Everything

If you feel the need to shove your head into the fridge as soon as you walk in the door, you likely didn’t [fuel your ride](#) adequately. “If you’re bonking in the shower, that’s a big sign that you’re not eating enough during your ride,” says Favery. “We often think not eating on the bike

is going to help us [lose weight](#), but that's the worst way to think about it. If you're starving after a workout, you do need to eat—but you also need to remember to fuel better next time!”

5. Not Reflecting on Your Workout

If you're serious about your [training](#), taking notes about each workout is important. The best time to record information about your ride is immediately after you finish—not three days later when you've forgotten how bad your gut felt after that third gel during your 20-minute [hill climb](#).

These notes provide insight into how to tweak your training, [mindset](#), and nutrition for your best performance. “Even if you don't have time or inclination to write a full comment about your training, you can give it a number rating or use an emoji to note how it felt,” says Novak. “That way, you at least have some point of reference that you or your coach can reflect back on.”

6. Going Right Into Your Most Important Meeting

If you're doing a [long ride](#) or a ride that includes [hard efforts](#), give yourself a buffer between your ride and any intense mental work. Many people don't realize the mental strain a workout can take, [but research has shown](#) mental fatigue can impair physical performance and vice versa. That means you probably aren't at your best when you've been focusing on those hill repeats for the last 75 minutes. Try to time your rides and workouts so that when you get back, you can do more mundane work tasks for an hour or two before getting back into the hard work.

The same applies for family time: Rolling up to the house with three minutes to go before Timmy needs his ride to karate practice is going to make you feel stressed and rushed, versus having enough time to clean up and maybe tackle some household chores before it's time to leave.

If you're running your schedule that tight, there's always the risk that you take a wrong turn or get an untimely [flat](#) that causes a delay. There's nothing more awkward than joining your big work call via Zoom from the side of the road while still wearing your helmet, which is all the more reason to give yourself some buffer time between workouts and work.

7. Avoiding All Other Movement for the Rest of the Day

Riding for an hour is great and important for your overall health—but it shouldn't be the only movement that you do all day. Physiotherapist and author of [Built to Move](#), Kelly Starrett recommends 8,000 to 12,000 steps per day, and sadly, cycling doesn't count toward that number.

In fact, many of us who ride bikes can be considered “sedentary exercisers,” because we train on the bike, but spend the rest of the day tethered to our desks, car seats, or couch. While it’s understandable that after a big ride, you spend the day Netflix-and-chilling, try to work in walks, mobility work, and even some strength training at least a few days each week.

Also, try to avoid going straight from your bike to your desk—both positions put your hips in flexion, and this can lead to back pain, knee issues, and in the long term, can potentially affect your ability to run or even walk comfortably, says Starrett. A standing desk is a great option for giving your hips a break from that 90-degree angle after a ride, but if you’re stuck seated, at least pause for a few minutes of hip mobilizing stretches, like yoga’s Pigeon pose, a series of lunges, or even some foam rolling on your quads and upper thighs.

Okay riders, see ya’ next week. Until then,

Make Every Ride Epic,

Darryl