

Having spent nearly a decade helping [post show cool down stretches](#) touring acts with load-ins and load-outs, I've seen firsthand how the hours after a show can make or break your physical wellbeing on the road. Load-out injuries are no joke—whether it's that annoying repetitive strain from your instrument or the stiffness that sets in after hours crammed in a van. Touring isn't a party; it's manual labor layered with irregular sleep, constant lifting, and uncharted posture challenges that your body isn't always happy to handle.

In this post, we'll break down the best practices to help you recover faster right after load-out. From simple cool down stretches to smart hydration strategies, and topical recovery options like those from Joy Organics, I'll cover the essentials you need to avoid the common pitfalls of post-gig wear and tear.

Understanding the Physical Toll of Load-Out

First off, let's acknowledge what's really happening during and after load-out. Safe lifting techniques will always be your first line of defense. Improper lifting—such as twisting while carrying gear or rushing down stairs with a heavy amp—commonly causes sprains, strains, and worse. Your body faces:

- **Repetitive strain injuries** especially from instrument-specific motions
- **Stiffness and reduced circulation** due to prolonged van travel and limited movement
- **Accumulated sleep debt** coupled with adrenaline, delaying your ability to rest

Why Load-In Injuries and Safe Lifting Matter

It's tempting to rush your load-out, especially when the venue is closing or everyone's just ready to hit the road. But this is when injuries sneak in—muscle pulls from sudden overexertion or aggravating old strains. Maintaining proper biomechanics while lifting not only prevents acute injury, but limits wear on your joints and muscles over time. Think about:

- Keeping a straight back and bending at the knees
- Avoiding twisting while holding heavy or bulky equipment
- Using dollies and wheels whenever possible to minimize load
- Communicating clearly with your crew to synchronize movements

These steps can save you from that demoralizing “tweaked muscle” feeling that often lingers well beyond the overnight van ride.

Post Load-Out Topical Treatments and Tools

Once you've safely packed the van and stashed your gear, the immediate focus should be on calming any muscle inflammation and promoting circulation. While foam rolling is popular, for some of you, **kinesiology tape** and a simple lacrosse ball work wonders:

Kinesiology Tape for Muscle Support and Pain Relief

This stretchy tape not only provides support for strained muscles but also helps improve blood flow and reduces swelling. Applying kinesiology tape post-load-out can:

- Speed up recovery by easing muscle fatigue
- Reduce the likelihood of cramping during your van ride

- Offer proprioceptive feedback to remind you to maintain better posture

Learn the taping techniques specific to your instrument's repetitive motions—guitar players often tape the forearm or wrist; drummers may focus on thumbs and wrists to combat repetitive strain.

Lacrosse Ball for Targeted Muscle Release

Caught those tight spots after lifting that heavy bass amp? A lacrosse ball is your portable massage therapist. Here's why it's essential:

- Pinpoints knots and releases tension in hard-to-reach muscles
- Improves blood flow to targeted areas, speeding repair
- Fits easily into your gear bag along with your picks and cables

Try gently rolling the lacrosse ball on the back, shoulders, hips, or feet. This helps flush metabolic waste and resets muscle tightness before stiffness sets in.

Cool Down Stretches to Do Immediately After Load-Out

The phrase "cool down stretches" might sound like gym jargon, but it's crucial for preventing the kind of post-load-out tightness that turns into chronic pain on tour. Stretching also helps gently coax your heart rate down after strenuous lifting and walking up and down stairs.

Here's a short routine to incorporate within 15-20 minutes post load-out:

1. **Hamstring Stretch:** Sit on the floor with one leg extended, reach for your toes slowly. Hold for 30 seconds, switch legs.
2. **Shoulder Rolls:** Roll your shoulders slowly forward and backward, 10 reps each way.
3. **Chest Opener:** Clasp your hands behind your back and gently lift arms while squeezing shoulder blades. Hold 20-30 seconds.
4. **Hip Flexor Stretch:** Kneel on one knee, other foot flat in front. Gently push hips forward. Hold 30 seconds per side.
5. **Neck Tilts:** Slowly tilt your head towards each shoulder, holding for 15 seconds each side.

Every one of these targets muscles that take a pounding during load-out or become stiff after van rides.

Van Travel: Combating Stiffness and Poor Circulation

Hours squeezed into a van seat can cause circulation snarls, increasing your chances of muscle cramps and soreness the next day. I've seen many musicians suffer from leg numbness or back pain during these long rides due to poor posture and limited movement. Here are some essentials:

- **Move Often:** Whenever you can, stand up, stretch, and walk around.
- **Circulation Boosters:** Simple calf pumps and ankle circles can be done while seated.
- **Comfort Supports:** Invest in seat cushions that promote proper spine alignment.

Don't underestimate the power of these quick fixes in reducing stiffness and helping you wake up pain-free the morning after load-out.

Sleep Debt and Adrenaline Timing: What You Need to Know

Adrenaline often spikes during load-out, masking fatigue and pain as you hustle to get on the road. But this comes at a cost. Post-load-out, your body's natural rest signals can take hours to catch up because adrenaline suppresses sleepiness temporarily.

Here are practical tips to counteract this:

- **Prioritize Sleep as Soon as Possible:** Try to get at least 6-7 hours in the next available sleep window to repay your sleep debt.
- **Consider CBD Topicals:** Products like those from Joy Organics can help ease muscle soreness topically, promoting relaxation without the drowsiness often associated with oral supplements.
- **Avoid Skipping Hydration:** Sleep quality suffers tremendously when you're dehydrated, so keep water and electrolyte balance in check.

Hydrate and Electrolytes: Your Secret Weapon for Faster Recovery

Probably the most neglected point I stress on tour is this: **do not skimp on water and electrolytes**. Musicians often blame "getting sick on tour" when it's actually dehydration or electrolyte imbalance after heavy sweat sessions and irregular meals.

Here's what you should do immediately after load-out:





1. Drink at least 16-24 ounces of water with balanced electrolytes to replenish minerals like sodium, potassium, and magnesium.
2. Choose beverages that don't contain excessive caffeine or sugar. Coconut water, electrolyte powders, or hydration formulas work well.
3. Continue steady hydration en route to your next stop or hotel.

Summary Table: Key Immediate Post Load-Out Recovery Steps

Recovery Step	Why It Helps	How to Do It	Recommended Tools	Safe Lifting & Posture	Prevents acute and chronic injury
Use knees, avoid twisting, use dollies	Proper footwear, equipment dollies	Topical Muscle Relief	Reduces inflammation and supports recovery	Apply after load-out to sore areas	Joy Organics CBD topical, kinesiology tape
Targeted Muscle Release	Flushes knots and enhances circulation	Roll lacrosse ball on tender spots	Lacrosse ball	Cool Down Stretches	Prevents stiffness and improves flexibility
15-20 min stretching routine	None needed	Hydrate & Replenish Electrolytes	Supports muscle function and sleep quality	Drink 16-24 oz electrolyte water post load-out	Electrolyte powders or drinks
Manage Sleep Debt	Ensures healing and restoration	Rest ASAP; use CBD topical for soreness	Joy Organics CBD products		

Final Thoughts

Fast recovery after load-out isn't about "pushing through the pain" or treating the tour like a constant party—it's about smart, consistent habits that protect your body over months or years of performing. The physical demands of touring are real, from lifting and repetitive strain to van ride stiffness and disrupted sleep. Embrace proper lifting technique, cool down stretching, targeted muscle release with tools like lacrosse balls and kinesiology tape, and don't overlook hydration and topical aids such as products from Joy Organics. Your body will thank you—and more importantly, you'll be ready to perform at your best show after show.

Remember, it's not glamorous work, but it's necessary work. Take care of your instrument, your gear, and above all, yourself.