

SportsNutrition

Nancy Clark, MS, RD
1300 Boylston St., Brookline, MA 02467

www.nancyclarkrd.com
617-795-1875

The Athlete's Kitchen

"I've got my training down to a science, but nutrition is my missing link." ... "My diet is horrible. I'm so good at exercising but I'm so bad at eating." ... "I'm training hard but not getting the results I want. I guess I should eat better...?"

Some athletes joke about their sea food diet. They "see" food, and they eat it. Sometimes they eat too much, and often they eat the "wrong" foods. While it's no secret that some good athletes have "junky" diets, the question arises: Could those athlete perform better if they ate better?

The answer, as documented by research studies, suggests 6% to 20% better. Wow—that's a lot! Eating the right foods at the right times makes a significant improvement not only in today's performance and weight management but also for tomorrow's health and well-being. I've helped many very good athletes build bigger muscles, run faster marathons, and compete with higher energy; many fitness exercisers to train better, lose undesired body fat and improve dramatically. Perhaps this can be *your* year to significantly enhance your health and performance by fueling better?

Don't just eat; eat right

To their demise, many athletes not only fail to eat well, they are unaware of the benefits to be gained by consulting with a sports dietitian. The common explanation is *"I know what I should eat, I just don't do it."* If this sounds familiar, you undoubtedly do know you should get your Vitamin C from fruits and veggies, not from C-3 supplements (translation: Chocolate Chip Cookies). And you undoubtedly know you shouldn't dive into the half-gallon container of ice cream the minute you return home from the health club. But why do you continue to do those behaviors? And how can you revise those habits? These are the issues that deserve your attention.

Nutrition information often goes in one ear and out the other, without getting stuck in the brain and put into action. That's because "eating well" can easily get confused with undesired feelings of denial and deprivation, or with a deficiency of fun-foods and an excess of duty-foods. Life without ice cream can seem gloomy. Plus, on a sub-conscious level, you may be responding to media's messages that persuade you to indulge. *You deserve a food reward today, right?*

Given that you know what you should eat for health and performance, you have no need to team up with a sports dietitian, right? (After all, why would you pay someone only to embarrass yourself while confessing your quirky food habits?) But maybe that sports dietitian can help you have your cake and eat it too—and find a livable balance between a "junky diet" and a performance enhancing diet.

Knowledge is power

You don't know what you don't know. I work with a lot of highly intelligent athletes who have abundant nutrition

When Nutrition is the Missing Link

knowledge, but they are not registered dietitians (RDs) with at least four years of undergraduate education related to food and nutrition sciences, plus another year or two of a dietetics internship and/or graduate school. Your coach, exercise physiologist, personal trainer, and teammates may appear to be nutrition experts and offer nutrition advice, but only registered dietitians (RDs) have the training that makes them professionally recognized as the true experts.

RDs who specialize in sports nutrition can now take an exam to become Board Certified as a Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD). The American Dietetic Association, the nation's largest group of nutrition professionals, acknowledges this specialty niche—just as they have for RDs who specialize in renal disease and pediatrics. Sports dietitians who meet specific educational requirements and work experiences are eligible to take this exam and qualify for the meaningful CSSD title. They know the ins and outs of foods and fluids as they relate to performance for active people.

To find a local CSSD sports dietitian, use the referral network at www.SCANdpg.org, the website for SCAN—the sports nutrition dietetics practice group of ADA. Or go to eatright.org, ADA's website. Put your zipcode into the *Find A Nutrition Professional* referral network.

Make an appointment today

What can you learn from a CSSD/sports dietitian that you do not already know (or know how to put into practice)?

- How many calories you deserve to eat ... and how many of them can be from junk food (if desired).
- When to eat so you optimize energy, muscle growth and repair, and performance. No more running out of gas during workouts...or at work, for that matter!
- The right balance of carbs to fuel your muscles, protein to build your muscles—with sample menus and food ideas.
- How much fat is OK to eat—without clogging arteries.
- How to sneak more fruits and veggies into your daily food plan so you effortlessly enjoy these health-protectors.
- Tricks to tame the cookie monster. (Hint: The cookie monster visits when you get too hungry. Front-load calories.)
- How to get enough protein at meals, even if you are a vegetarian. The money you save on protein supplements can likely pay for your nutrition consultation!

The bottom line

If you show up for training, physical therapy, massages, etc., but do not show up for sports meals, think again. When your goal is to move to the next level of performance, consulting with a CSSD can be your winning edge.

Nancy Clark, MS, RD, CSSD counsels casual exercisers and competitive athletes in her private practice at Healthworks, the premier fitness center in Chestnut Hill MA (617-383-6100). Her *Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, *Food Guide for Marathoners* and *Cyclist's Food Guide* are available at www.nancyclarkrd.com. For her workshop information, see www.sportsnutritionworkshop.com.