

Lacto vegetarianism: for athletes

Business



As athletic ability has increased exponentially over the past few decades, competitors have been on the lookout for anything that may boost performance. Athletes have coughed up millions trying out new supplements, training methods, and equipment. While many of these “panaceas” for athletic prowess are simple hogwash, ample nutrition has remained steadfast as a pillar of athleticism. However, there are many conflicting viewpoints on nutrition; many believe that a diet devoid of meat is as harmful for an athlete as a diet of soda and Twinkies.

This could not be further from the truth. In fact, lacto-vegetarianism provides the necessary nutritional stimulus needed for athletes to perform at an optimal level. The main argument against lacto-vegetarianism is that it doesn't provide any significant protein source, such as fish or eggs.

However, such accusations fail to consider the variegated sources of protein available. The prefix “lacto” indicates dairy, one of the best sources of protein one can consume. Dairy comes in many forms, such as the many types of cheese, khulfi, curds, and most significantly, milk.

Bodybuilders have touted milk as the best natural supplement since bodybuilding's inception in the 1890s. Randall J. Strossen's bestseller “Super Squats” advises trainees “to drink at least two quarts of milk a day” (Super Squats 13). Strossen's routine has gained fame as the “squats and milk” routine and has been followed by bodybuilding legends such as Mike Mentzer, Reg Park, and most recently, Arnold Schwarzenegger. However, despite its obvious salutary benefits, dairy is not the only source of protein available.

Legumes, including the various types of beans and nuts, are significant sources of soy protein. Just one cup of roasted soybeans provides 68 grams of protein. Soy protein is also the only vegetarian source that “contains all eight essential amino acids”, which are necessary for muscle fiber synthesis (Montgomery 3). Due to its provision of said amino acids, soy protein fills in any holes left in a diet without any need for protein supplementation. In fact, the mix of amino acids creates protein of higher quality than protein found in meat, which means a vegetarian will need less protein than a meat-eater will.

For example, David Gelato, a record-holding power lifter, “takes in only 120 grams of protein a day, while meat eaters double or triple that amount,” (McGeeney 20). That isn’t to say supplements are entirely without use; in fact, protein supplementation is an easy way to get extra protein in a vegetarian diet. There’s no need for meat when just 1 serving of powdered whey has 20 grams of protein, along with extra BCAAs that are crucial for repairing muscle fibers. Even better, the protein is packed into only 120 calories. This is a recurring benefit of vegetarianism; many nutrients are packed into very few calories. This is extremely helpful for reducing extra weight and body fat.

Any athlete can use a better body composition, and some athletes, such as wrestlers and boxers, actually depend on dropping weight to stay competitive. Usually, dropping weight is a stressful and emotionally demanding experience that can cause an athlete to feel extremely fatigued. However, in a study conducted by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, participants who switched to a vegetarian diet “reported

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improvements in digestion and regularity and many also said they just felt better overall," (A Guide to Health Weight Loss 11). By switching to a vegetarian diet, not only can athletes lose weight, but they can also feel healthy while doing it. There's a reason that Popeye would pop a can of spinach into his mouth before proceeding to save the day. Spinach provides a healthy amount of iron necessary for red blood-cell function and " is a rich source of vitamin A, vitamin E and several vital antioxidants," (Is Spinach a Great Source of Iron 12).

There's also a reason why Popeye was head-over-heels in love with the gorgeous Olive Oyl; olive oil " provides nutrients to help develop and maintain your body's cells," (Monounsaturated Fats 17). Combine 1 cup of spinach with 1 tablespoon of olive oil and you get all of the nutrients in only 126 calories. The fat added to the spinach will keep one full for longer and " is needed to help access the stored carbohydrates" in the spinach, which provide energy for strenuous activity (Quinn 79). This is just one example of the many vegetarian options that can be mixed-and-matched to appeal to an athlete's performance and palate. Juicing is another great way to add wholesome nutrients into a calorie-deficit diet.

Simply toss in a cup of one's favorite fruits and vegetables, sprinkle in some protein-powder, add ice and water, and blend it all up. A whole blender full of juice contains very low calories but high amounts of energy and nutrients. Not only does a vegetarian diet provide an ample amount of nutrients for performance, it also reduces the risk of various physical ailments. "

According to the ADA, vegetarians are at a lower risk for developing heart disease, obesity, diabetes, hypertension", and various forms of cancers: this <https://assignbuster.com/lacto-vegetarianism-for-athletes/>

is due to the fact that a vegetarian diet is typically low in unhealthy fats and high in fiber (Being a Vegetarian 30). Furthermore, soy protein has been proven to reduce risk of cardiovascular disease as well because it reduces “ concentrations of cholesterol, low-density lipoproteins (LDLs), and triglycerides,” (Montgomery 13).

Any athlete can tell you that not having cardiac arrest (or the like) is a prerequisite to competition. Thousands have made the switch to vegetarianism, including professionals such as tennis player Serena Williams and MMA champion Jake Shields. No one can deny the wholesome benefits available to all athletes in a dense, low-calorie, protein-packed form provided through a vegetarian diet. Gone are the days when the vegetarian population was represented by famished yoga-instructors and meditating yogis. For any athlete desiring to boost his performance and stay healthy, a lacto-vegetarian diet is optimal.