

performance on a plant-forward diet

summary handout



A position statement from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the American College of Sports Medicine states that the performance of, and recovery from, sporting activities are enhanced by well-chosen nutrition strategies

What are the differences in plant-focused diets?

- **Plant-forward/flexitarian** – a style of cooking and eating that emphasizes plant-based foods but it not strictly limited to them. Meat and fish may be included, but it's usually not the main feature of the meal.
- **Vegetarian** – equivalent to a plant-based diet that does not include meat or fish, but may include dairy and eggs
- **Vegan** – entirely plant-based, excluding all animal products and byproducts including meat, fish, dairy, eggs

The benefits of a plant-forward diet for performance include:

1. Cardioprotective
2. Inhibits Inflammation
3. Improves Blood Flow
4. Increases Lean Body Mass
5. Reduces Oxidative Stress

Evidence for plant-based protein and exercise has shown the consumption of a plant protein source in an efficacious dose (typically larger than an animal protein) can instigate similar and favorable changes in amino acid uptake, MPS rates, and exercise training adaptations such as strength and body composition as well as recovery.

Key Conclusions:

- With vegetarian diets it is suggested to take the following steps when adjusting the athlete's diet:
 - a) determine which vegetarian diet the athlete is consuming
 - b) control the athlete's micronutrients and related biomarkers, especially vitamin B12, folate, vitamin D and iron
 - c) regulate the athlete's energy needs and all macro and micronutrient needs to prevent any deficiency
 - d) monitor the diet consumption and adjust it according to the needs based on individual- and sports-specific needs
- While reviews of the High Fat diet and sports performance have controversial results, the scientific evidence on the effectiveness of high fat diets on endurance performance is not strong enough to recommend these diets to endurance athletes.
- The evidence for Intermittent Fasting diets and endurance performance and health-related parameters also needs to be improved by further investigation. More evidence is needed before recommending the Intermittent Fasting diet to endurance athletes.

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