



# What is Sports Nutrition All About?

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## Introduction

As an experienced dietitian after years focused in studying and working with athletes of different levels and types of physical training and practices, it is consistently clear what really works in Sports Nutrition indeed: adequate food intake in quantity and quality. The knowledge and proper understanding of one's nutrition needs and how the experts are able to help clients to achieve it, considering economical aspects, cooking skills, logistics, among other challenges, is definitely the key for nutritional success. We never had so much information about nutrition, as we do nowadays with online information and artificial intelligence, however, human decisions and feelings cannot be complied with technological tools. Moreover, we never had so many supplements and ergogenic aids available on the market, like processed powders, pills, bars, drinks, formulas, etc. Everything is created to increase recovery, performance and give the ideal body composition. But what are the origins of all these nutrients sources? The answer is simple, it all comes from food sources, animals or vegetables. In nutrition it is a consensus, nothing replaces the food matrix, the digestive process is needed to prepare the nutrient to be better absorbed and metabolized to its usage by the body in all ages and phases of life.

So, I believe that adequate food planning and orientation, idealized by a qualified and sensible professional, is the key for adequate personalized nutrition. Especially when clients rely on their professional, by trusting and following their orientation entirely, when trying to remove myths and erroneous practices and allowing new and unknown nutritional practices. Even if there are, out there, countless information in nutrition and a huge marketing appeal, if you don't use, first, the deep scientific knowledge on how

metabolism and energy expenditure/efficiency work in human body and second, knowledge of food chemical composition, you can definitely lose track of what an adequate/balanced nutrition is, in order to achieve performance, reduce risks of injuries/metabolic harms and to maintain the adequate body composition.

Sports Nutrition sciences, offer the subsidies for the understanding of human physiology and biochemistry concerned to the body movements, energy requirements, metabolism efficiency, recovery system, body composition according to ones' genetic limitation and health. So, the understanding of the body demands and all that are involved in this process, facilitates the understanding of what are the individual needs, the intake timing for recovery, and as consequence, the planification of the food/nutrient intake on a personalized way. It means that adequate diet planning, based on food intake, and only when needed, the offer of supplements, avoids the banalization or unnecessary replacement of real food by high processed food, excess of supplements, formulas, etc. The replacement practice of food is many times unnecessary, besides being more expensive and offers some undesired outcomes, as the practice of a dissociative intake of nutrients, mainly by the intake of pre-digested formulas that do not allow the digestion process to benefit its use.

My nutrition strategies are based on what is well suggested and documented by the basic literature in nutrition. The food planning takes into account the carbohydrates and protein intake by grams by kilograms of the total ideal body weight. The level of energy expenditure and the predominance of the type of exercise performed (aerobic, anaerobic or combined) is taken into consideration by the application of the METs (metabolics) equivalents assessment. First, I modulate the caloric intake in order

to reach the ideal body composition (mainly by the manipulation of carbohydrates intake), but always respecting the particular body composition ethnicities. And second, reaching out the nutrients necessary to attend the daily demands of an average active person without any restriction. As an exception, the modalities or practices that overcome the need of more than 4500-5000 Calories (which is certainly not the majority of cases), a careful assessment will demonstrate the need for supplementation of nutrients in addition to the regular food intake, due to the difficultness of achieving the intake volume necessary to fulfill the number of calories. For fat, it can also be controlled by the sources of food suggested in order to reach out for carbohydrates and proteins. All types of fats are considered to be included by a diversity of food sources. It is more likely to say that one of the "nutrition laws", stated by Escudeiro in 1937, when recommended that ones' diet should include a great variety of food in order to reach out for the diversity of nutrients necessary for the body functioning and health condition.

While for micronutrients, as vitamins, minerals and oligo-elements, these nutrients are basically accompanied by foods sources of fibers. Fibers, of different types, besides offering satiation, is fundamental for the intake self-control, by acting along with the hypothalamic system. This is a very important issue, mainly for those involved in modalities where there is a need for body weight control and also for those trying lose body fat. Moreover, fibers are fundamental for the proper work of the immune system. Unfortunately, fibers are neglected by many people, mainly because of the influence of processed and occidental type of diet, not to mention the popular and modern practices towards food manipulation, as the dissociative diet, fasting practices, supplements overuse and others unbalanced dieting practices.

The supplementation of nutrients or ergogenic aids are also useful. However, its practice is often justified when the person starts to have difficulty in reaching the volume and the quality of food needed. It is worth saying that this practice is mainly guided by the body size and its high energy expenditure rate, according to the modality practiced and also psychological and economical issues, other situations may justify the use of supplements, as difficult in nutrient's absorption, poor digestion, drugs usage and other metabolic issues. In summary, food provides not only good nutrition for energy output or body composition, but also plays a central role to anxiety control and general health maintenance, trying to prevent injuries, and also allowing people to slow down our modern and chaotic life and look for themselves.

Throughout all these years, following trends and innovations in nutrition and sports nutrition, nothing has changed enough to change the so needed access to food in its whole. Even though the

food industry has been trying to solve the lack of nutrients intake by launching sophisticated and practical products, nothing will replace adequate food intake and nutritional education continues, more than never, needed to our modern society, regardless of their origin, habits and culture. The supplements or the industrialized isolated nutrients, many times in form of "foods", are out there in the market with the appeal of helping us find the balanced-adequate diet, but would it be true? Isn't it distorting our attitudes towards food intake and in some cases being able to even change our biological system?

To know what to eat, how much and how to put systematized nutrition into practice is definitely not simple. It demands time, energy implication and knowledge. It seems people are not patient or interested in doing so, that is the main reason why they show their shortcoming in respect to this practice. There are no doubts about the need for one's attention to this issue, real involvement and a professional orientation. The dedication time is not only necessary to acquire the knowledge, but to be able to put it into practice. This is something that may come gradually, an everyday endeavor. It will depend on one's needs, the nutrition knowledge, the organization of food availability, the skills definitely changed among other issues. The modernity has changed daily lives, and also the exposure to food and information concerned to it. I call for more caution to both professionals and to those who are sensible to the market appeals, when prescribing and/or buying manipulated substances offered by the food and pharmaceutical industry, and when advising and/or putting into practice unfounded diets. A systematized diet will not only offer the benefits food nutrients, but the comfort of being able to eat/chew foods and feel the pleasure of a real recipe or certain dish, avoiding the "eating terrorism", and stimulating the satiety hormones and improving the immune system by building an adequate gut flora. In contrary, the manipulated eating practice may, many times, lead the subjects to confusion of what is good, normal or correct, what time and how much they should be eating. There is a need to rescue the basic information on ordinary attitudes towards food intake. More than never, I believe in the simplest and most natural way of eating is the best for us all in all senses and aspects of our modern life.

### Acknowledgment

None.

### Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.