

Common Myths about Athletic Performance

Athletes and their coaches are particularly susceptible to myths and claims about foods and dietary supplements, in the relentless search for the 'competitive edge'. Naturally, if there were such a super compound, it would be of interest to all athletes & their trainers. However, scientific research has exposed most of these claims as unfounded. Some of these myths include the following:

- Athletes need protein for energy
- Extra protein is needed to build bigger and stronger muscles
- Muscle tissue is broken down during exercise and protein supplements are needed to replace this breakdown.
- Vitamin supplements are needed to enable athletes to use more energy.
- Vitamins and minerals are burned up in workouts and training sessions.
- Sugar is needed before and during performance to enhance energy levels.
- Drinking water during exercise will cause cramps.

Exercise for Sanity! How it works...

Stress Management

Exercise provides a physical outlet for working off the hormonal physiologic effects of adrenaline produced in the body by stress, thus helping to reduce a major risk factor in the development of chronic disease.

Mental Health

Exercise stimulates the production of brain opiates, which are the substances called *endorphins*. These natural substances decrease pain (this is how aspirin works, by stimulating production of endorphins) and improve the mood, including an exhilarating kind of 'high'.

Vitamin D – Essential for Cardiovascular Health

Vitamin D is crucial for cardiovascular health at all life stages. Vit D deficiency is linked to life-threatening heart failure in infants. In early childhood, vit D deficiency is associated with cardiomyopathy and congestive heart failure. In adults, low circulating 25D levels correlate with congestive heart failure.

Vitamin D deficiency has also been associated with obesity and metabolic syndrome, it also plays a vital role in immune system integrity and asthma prevention. Vitamin D is sourced from sunlight (15min per day to the upper torso is adequate) and only if D-receptors are functioning adequately for uptake. Supplementation is also available – please select carefully, vit D is difficult to stabilise. I am only aware of two 'practitioner' brands that have successfully done this. It is believed that up to 80% of Australians are Vit D deficient. Most GP's can now routinely test for Vitamin D. Kidd, P (2010).

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Certain Sunscreens May Be Hazardous to Your Health

A consumer advocacy group has a warning for parents who think they're protecting their family with sunscreen: You may be getting burned.

A study carried out by the Sunscreen Guide by Environmental Working Group (EWG), a Washington-based non-profit organisation, concluded that only 8% out of the 500 sunscreen products they looked at were any good. <http://www.ewg.org/2010sunscreens/>

The Low Down on 'Caltrate'

If you go to your Doctor and they happen to prescribe you with a Calcium supplement, it is likely that they will recommend the popular pharmacy brand 'Caltrate[®]'. So, does this Calcium supplement stack up? Is it worth the money that droves of Australians spend to increase their calcium levels, protect their bones, and prevent disease?

The research points to no. Different forms of calcium vary in their bioavailability and calcium carbonate (the form used in Caltrate[®]) is poorly absorbed by the body. Studies show calcium citrate raises plasma calcium concentrations by 94% more than calcium carbonate in postmenopausal women. The same study determined that calcium citrate decreased markers of bone resorption

(where your body leaches calcium from your bones) significantly more than calcium carbonate.
(Albertazzi P, Steel SA, Howarth EM & Purdie DW 2004)

Anaemia

Looking pale? Feeling weak and tired? There's a quick blood test available to assess whether anaemia is to blame - and if so, whether it's caused by iron-poor blood or something else.

What is it?

Anaemia is a condition in which there is a shortage of red cells in the body or a deficiency of haemoglobin (the pigment that carries oxygen) in these cells. When anaemia occurs, the body doesn't get enough oxygen, and weakness and fatigue result. If you suspect you are anaemic, doctor to ascertain the underlying cause of the problem.

Iron is a key component of haemoglobin, and vitamin C helps the body absorb the mineral. Take iron only under your health practitioner's supervision, because too much can be dangerous. I prescribe a natural low-dose iron supplement in my clinic, which combines herbal medicines which do not cause constipation. ☺

Why Fish Oils Aren't All The Same

One of the most common questions we get asked is "Why should I spend more on fish oil from you, when I can get a cheaper version from the chemist?" The answer is not as simple as just cost.

When you walk into any chemist, pharmacy or even supermarket, you will see the shelves littered with many different brands of fish oils, often carrying 'budget' and 'value' stickers that make them seem like value for money. Really, 300 capsules for \$9.95 is a bargain, right? WRONG. These budget brands could actually be doing you more harm than good. <http://emed.com.au/article.php?Doo=ContentView&id=2665>

Cereal Offenders

'Junk food' breakfast cereals are a major concern, containing alarming amounts of sugar and salt. About 7.5 million Australians regularly buy cereal, but what are we really eating? In some cases it's more salt than a packet of chips and more sugar than an iced doughnut. Even cereals that may appear to be nutritious can be laced with sugar and salt. Kellogg's are the worst offenders for false or misleading advertising, claiming that their products are 'healthy & nutritious'. Your best options are at your local health food store. Gluten free muesli is also a great alternative.

Eating to Reduce Inflammation

Research is now confirming that the root of many health conditions, so prevalent today that they have become an accepted part of the human condition, can be traced to a common cause – systemic INFLAMMATION within the body. Are the Foods You Eat Harming You?

Conditions such as asthma, obesity, chronic fatigue, menstrual pain, back pain, irritable bowel, osteoporosis, arthritis, headaches and even migraines are all often associated with an INFLAMED condition of the cells. Your diet has a direct impact on the inflammatory levels in your body. The big dietary offenders are wheat based foods, cow's milk & sugar. Give your body a break occasionally and try some gluten free pasta, almond milk or Stevia as a sweet alternative.

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