GKU Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (GKUJMR)

The Science Behind Sports Nutrition: Strategies for Achieving Peak Physical Performance

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Accepted: 26.11.2025 Published: 26.12.2025 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.18113690

Abstract – Objectives: Scientific nutritional strategies need to be fully implemented when optimizing athletes' performance. Evidence-based dietary practices are now essential to improving endurance, strength, and recovery in athletes. This study aims to examine the effects of scientific nutrition strategies on enhancing peak physical performance. Aims: The main purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of evidence-based nutrition strategies in achievement of athletic performance. This study also sought to investigate the role of some important dietary factors in carbohydrate periodization, protein timing, micronutrient regulation, and personalized nutrition strategies. Results: This review was based on the existing literature in peer-reviewed journals which describe studies that have looked at nutritional strategies to improve performance parameters. We synthesised research findings on macronutrient intake, hydration protocols and novel nutritional methods (e.g. nutrigenomics). Results: Our analysis indicates the effectiveness of carbohydrate periodization in sustaining endurance and the importance of post exercise protein consumption in enhancing muscle anabolism and recovery. Adequate hydration strategies facilitated thermoregulatory processes which minimized the decrease in performance when exercising for a prolonged period. Dietary interventions tailored to individual genetics and metabolic responses were seen in personalized nutrition approaches. Final Note: The science of sports nutrition provides real ways to fuel athletic performance. The intelligent implementation of contextually relevant evidence–based practices in addition to the specific responses to the training load may have great potential in optimizing strength and endurance training and recovery. Further research is needed to help develop new dietary strategies for improving performance outcomes.

Keywords – Sports Nutrition, Nutritional Strategies, Athletic Performance, Personalized Nutrition, Macronutrient Management

I. INTRODUCTION

Sports nutrition is one of the basics behind improving performance, recovery, and well-being in sport. Over the years, the link between nutrition and performance has been gradually revealed through scientific evidence, with specifically-calibrated nutritional strategies supplying real benefits to the competitive athlete (Burke et al., 2019). Since then, applying the principles of science to sports nutrition has allowed athletes to enhance endurance, strength, and recovery using targeted orientated diets (Thomas, Erdman, & Burke, 2016).

Managing your intake of macronutrients, namely carbohydrate loading and timing, protein timing, and fat utilization, is important for the fuelling of exercise and recovery from the (Jeukendrup, 2017). This is because carbohydrates are mainly responsible for glycogen store maintenance and proteins are important nutrients for muscle recovery and growth (Phillips et al., 2016). Moreover, some micronutrients like iron, calcium and vitamin D play important roles in bone mineral density, oxygen transport, and immune function of athletes (Maughan et al., 2018). Robust hydration strategies are an additional aid for thermoregulation and preventing reductions in performance during prolonged exercise (Casa et al., 2019).

Advancements like personalized nutrition and nutrigenomics open new opportunities for maximizing individual performance outputs through genetic and metabolic influenced dietary interventions (Kato et al., 2021). Athletes can use science-based approaches to nutrition to reach their peak physical capabilities, and critical performance improvements can occur over time with proper nutrition strategies.

Specifically, this study will identify how possible nutritional strategies integrated into the training season can have a direct impact on performance results (key dietary interventions to reach optimize peak performance states in well-trained endurance athletes). By adopting a science-driven nutritional approach, athletes can harness the power of precise dietary planning to optimize their performance potential.

II. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The methods of this comprehensive review were meticulously planned to cover all aspects of diet, physiology, and their roles in sports performance as a whole. The effort here was to unite what we now know and create a holistic view of how these components come together to enhance sport performance. The systematic nature of this review ensures a comprehensive and unbiased overview of the current understanding of dietary, physiological and exercise performance interactions. It will provide players, coaches, sports scientists and nutritionists with data that will all be beneficial in helping you to improve your training performance.

2.1 Literature Search Strategy:

Methods a literature search was performed using various databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science). The search approach employed terms including

"sport and nutrition", "sports science", "field performance", "nutritional methods in sport" and "physiological determinants in athletes". Variations of these terms were subsequently used to include as many relevant studies as possible.

III. Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion:

If studies were about the interaction of nutrition and health on sport performance, they were included. This included original study papers, review papers, meta analyses and expert commentaries. Only studies that provided new information, comprehensive reviews, or significant theoretical contributions to the fields of sports nutrition or exercise physiology were eligible for inclusion. Articles/studies that were not peer-reviewed, not published in English, or not specific to sports, not involving athletes, or about non-sport diet and physiological issues were excluded.

IV. Data Synthesis and Analysis:

Organizing the data into themes that represented the principal areas of sports nutrition, physiological factors that determine excellence in performance sports, and interactions between the two. We examined the methods and results of each study and its relevance to the review's primary focus. The synthesis required us to critically assess the strength of the evidence, identify convergences and divergences in the literature and derive some understanding of what the findings imply for practice.

V. Discussion:

Over the last decade, we have seen an increase in published research and reviews, sports organization consensus statements and more opportunities to gain qualifications and accreditations in sports nutrition and dietetics. This demonstrates that sports nutrition is an area of science and practice that is rapidly evolving and provides an increasing range of evidence-based advice for athletes. To reinforce and weaves together the recommendations in this paper, it is informative to consider several prevailing themes in sports nutrition which precede a more specific topic discussion.

VI. New Perspectives in Sports Nutrition:

1. Over time, nutritional needs and objectives evolve. Athletes follow a periodized schedule leading up to their peak performance in certain events, with specific needs during each phase of the training calendar from possible aerobic work with points of threshold, speed and anaerobic efforts, speed endurance, and finally competition focused work all included in these cycles of workouts. Food support needs to be spread out over time as well based on daily workout demands (which can be minimal for "easy" workouts and extreme for high quality workouts like high-intensity, hard, or very technical workouts), and across the broader macro goals.
2. However, each athlete's nutrient requirements are ultimately going to differ based not only on preferences the event itself, competitive goals, practical realities, and responses to various strategies
3. Realistically, one of the main purposes of training is to alter the body to be more metabolically efficient and adaptable. Competition diet plans are all about ensuring that substrate stores are adequate to provide the fuel necessary to compete with optimal cognitive performance.
4. Energy availability (the energy you ingest, compared to the energy you expend during training) represents an important aspect of health and also ULTIMATELY determines the efficacy of your sports nutrition strategy.
5. Acquiring the body makeup that signals peak performance is a so-called holy grail, and one that is now recognized as complex and individualistic and long-term in its design. In order to safeguard health and lifelong success, a person ought to refrain from actions that complicate access to energy and create mental friction.
6. The training–diet interaction is critical for both acclimatization and ergogenic functional and metabolic adaptations. To clarify, performance benefits from proactive dietary assistance, while adaptations to training may be facilitated without it.
7. Nutrition and exercise synergize very nicely to prepare the body for the functional and metabolic adaptations. While elite performers require proactive nutrition support to operate at their peak performance, these training changes may be best in the absence of that support.
8. The protein, carbohydrates, and energy will be expressed in relation to per kg body mass to differentiate recommendations for athletes of different sizes. Daily goals, nutrient timing and day and sport-specific guidance should all be included in a sports nutrition prescription
9. Just as with everything in life, balance is essential if not optimal, especially for highly-trained athletes who must find the fine edge between training well enough to gain maximal (positive) training stimulus without overdoing it and becoming sick or injured.
10. Several new performance nutrition tools stem from growing—but still preliminary—evidence that the brain has the capacity to sense the presence of carbohydrates and possibly other nutrients in the mouth and to

modulate performance and the decision-making to work faster. While the improvement is through a central effect, as it was previously thought that consuming these substances would not provide a metabolic gain in short events, these results therefore allow for eating or drinking in short events.

11. So it is time to get human and more practical about supplements and sports foods, which have triggered the interest and use of practically all athlete (due to its vast and effective supply, respectively), and for which a part of the products can at least be beneficial as an adjunct to the sports nutrition plan and/or directly for exercise performance15. So, again, its most appealing advantage is quickly persuading athletes to think of the advantages and disadvantages of using these sorts of products in a supportive manner and that they're only effective when complemented with a healthful eating routine

VII. ACUTE FUELLING STRATEGIES:

The guidelines promote keeping a high carbohydrate stock ready for optimal performance in competition or critical training

TABLE 7.1 SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR CARBOHYDRATE INTAKE BY ATHLETES

General Fueling Up	Preparation for events < 90 min exercise	7-12 g/kg per 24h as compared to daily fuel needs	To ensure that pathogen plans are being reached, and that desires for gut comfort/policies lighter 'racing weight' are being met, athletes may select higher carbohydrate sources low in fibre/residue and easily able to eat.
Carbohydrate loading	Preparation for events 9 90 min of sustained/intermittent exercise	d (~10–12 g/kg) during 36–48 h	It all points towards, eating small regular snacks might have its advantages
Speedy refueling	<8 hours recovery between 2 fuel demanding sessions	1–1.2 g/kg/h for the first 4 hours followed by daily fuel requirements	Ensuring that fuel targets are covered can be aided by carbohydrate rich foods and drink
Pre-event fueling	Before exercise > 60 min	1–4 g/kg ingested 1–4 h prior to exercise	The timing, quantity and type of carbohydrates food and drinks should be chosen to align with the practical requirements of the event and individual preferences/experiences. If this is the case, in order to minimize risk of GI issues during the event, choices high in fat/protein/fibre may need to be avoided. Low GI options may be a better source of energy in situations where carbohydrate cannot be consumed during exercise, providing a more sustained energy source

TABLE 7.2 DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS AND SPORTS FOODS WITH EVIDENCE-BASED USES IN SPORTS NUTRITION

Category	Sports Food	Medical Supplements
Example	Sports drinks Sports bars Sports Confectionery Protein Supplements Liquid meal supplements	Iron supplements Calcium supplements Vitamin-D supplements Multi-vitamin/mineral n-3 fatty acids
Use	Practical option for achieving sports nutritional needs when food access, opportunities to consume nutrients or gastrointestinal issues make ingestion of traditional food and drink products difficult	Prevention or treatment of nutrient deficiency supervised by appropriate healthcare/nutrition professional
Concerns	Whole foods it too high price Utilized inappropriately or	Self-prescribed when it may not be clinically indicated, which may go disregarded without

Category	Sports Food	Medical Supplements
	not needed protocols	appropriate supervision or monitoring
Evidence	Burke (2015)	Burke (2015)

VIII. Experience And Responsibilities of The Sports Dietitian

The tasks performed by a sport nutritionist require an understanding of clinical nutrition, nutrition science, exercise physiology, and applying existing research. An increasing number of athletes / season people hire professionals to guide them on which foods and beverages would be best for performance and benefits. An experienced sports dietitian has the knowledge, training, and experience to help athletes and teams achieve their performance goals.

A distinctive credential in sports dietetic practice for registered dietitian nutritionists who frequently work with athletes has been established by the Commission on Dietetic Registration, responsible for the credentialing component of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The highest level of professional credential in the US in the area of sports nutrition is the Board-Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD). It's also available in other countries such as Canada, Sports dietetics specialists provide science-based and evidence-based nutrition assessments, recommendations, and counseling to help individuals and groups of athletes and physically active people and groups to improve health and performance through safe and effective sports nutrition practices. Visit www.cdrnet. Check this out: CSSD certification by the Commission on Dietetic Registration at www.cdrnet.org. Another way to continue your education and skills in sports nutrition is to obtain a national post-graduate qualification, such as the 2-year online learning IOC Diploma in Sports Nutrition. Visit Sports Oracle at www.sportsoracle.com/Nutrition/Home/ to find out more. According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics157: *"sports dietitians render medical nutrition therapy in direct care and design, implement, and manage safe and effective nutrition strategies to enhance lifelong health, fitness, and optimal physical performance."* Now, a checklist of what sports dietitians what work with players need.

IX. Conclusion

Scientific advancements in sports nutrition have significantly improved the understanding of dietary strategies that optimize athletic performance. By adopting evidence-based approaches such as carbohydrate periodization, protein timing, and micronutrient management, athletes can enhance endurance, recovery, and overall physical potential. Integrating personalized nutrition strategies further refines dietary interventions, aligning nutrition plans with individual physiological needs. As research continues to evolve, the application of science-driven nutritional strategies remains vital in supporting athletes to achieve peak performance and sustained success.

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