

## **Sports And Performance Nutrition**

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### **Lecture-39: Connections of sports nutrition**

Hello everybody. In this lecture, we are going to be talking about interconnections and integration in sports nutrition. Several individuals and stakeholders have a role to play in an athlete's journey. Parents, coaches, sports nutritionists and dieticians can bring out the best in athletes' performance. There are several factors that influence an athlete's behaviour. Let's understand more on these aspects.

I hope this particular slide can take you back to the first lecture of the sports and exercise performance. And if you recollect, I emphatically had mentioned that there are several individuals who are responsible for an athlete's wellbeing. The whole sports science team has an athlete at the centre of their focus. Like the saying that, of course, it takes a village to raise a child.

And I personally also believe that is the case even to hone the athletic abilities of a child. From the immediate family members to parents who take the most trouble for the day-to-day training to other financial aspects. From the coach who spends a lot of intimate time with a child and the teammates who sometimes share the bond more than a family member. The whole sports science team who works very closely with the athlete. The athlete support system expands to even friends, sponsors and those who offer infrastructure support.

As a practicing sports dietitian, I would commend the role of a dietitian or a nutritionist who helps an athlete build healthier eating practices. The meal plans and diet charts and the scientific supplement protocols when planned with the rest of the sports science team can surely improve performance of that athlete. And the most important attribute of the competency is for a sports dietitian and nutritionist who is able to make very scientific suggestions based on evidence and the latest research guidelines. The role of a dietitian or a nutritionist does not end with just offering a diet chart or a meal plan. Sharing the knowledge through educating several members from the coach to the parents and most importantly the athlete on why he needs to consume the suggested ingredient or a nutrient can help him adapt to these suggestions better.

Simultaneously by offering the continuing education, a sports nutritionist or dietitian is also monitoring for compliance of the suggested meal plan and the hydration strategy. Food is very dynamic and we have in the previous chapter discussed several parameters or factors that influence food consumption. An athlete's choice of food can be influenced by several aspects. As an athlete spends a lot of time either in school, college or with team members it is but natural for them to be influenced by their immediate peers. Their perception and the belief around food definitely cannot be overlooked.

Their nutrition literacy of how much they know about nutrition, food science can determine their approach to the food that they consume and all the jargon put to the side what simply

governs food intake is the likes and dislikes and many times the convenience aspect of what is available. So sports nutritionist or a dietitian is not only offering the latest knowledge and simplifying the scientific jargon is handholding and offering ongoing support most importantly he or she is able to also give very objective feedback so the athlete can make the necessary changes and like I said all of this being pleasant, positive and professional and we discussed this in the previous chapter of how as a sports science individual we could try and convey this message across effectively. One common dilemma I am often faced during consultation is the competition outcomes which often percolates in the discussions. In competitive sports it is but natural that winning the tournament is the ultimate goal. The initial tools of the trade in the dietetic assessments we discussed about how tracking the anthropometry be it the height, weight or body composition, immune parameters where an athlete is falling ill often has disturbed sleep or is constantly facing with recovery challenges and has to take days off training or unfortunately has faced an injury and has gone off training can be important aspects that can also help document progress.

Like I have said obsessing only with winning may not be the right approach. So does the role of a sports dietitian or a nutritionist is only limited to the counseling or a clinic setting? Once the meal plan is offered all the work commences thereafter in supporting the ongoing queries, phone calls, messages and perhaps a revisit for a continued consultation assistance. In addition if it is not an individual session in group seminars work is done even at an academy where we discuss and chalk out strategies to improve performance. It is very helpful when a nutritionist or a sports dietitian is taking the time to also spend time with the athlete during the training and definitely to be there when possible for a tournament or a competition to cheer and applaud the athlete. There are also some concerns that a practicing sports dietitian or a nutritionist could face strong opinions about food, time constraints, the lack of discipline or the inability to follow the suggested meal plans or non-compliance.

If there are any health concerns that require specialized dietary interventions and trying to offer meal plans to suit the logistics be travel or tournament and keeping costs in mind as sports can be very expensive and this requires a bit of adjusting where you can swap and offer alternatives and with patience and due course of time some of these alternative options can click. Parents are the pillars of athletic performance. They not only take care of the athlete and run around for the daily need of education training to strengthen conditioning or the strength training requirement they are there to offer unconditional support and encouragement for the award and one of the most important logistic challenge of executing the suggested meal plan is under the care of a parent. In improving the food habits of athletes parents have a very important role to play leading by example. If an athlete is in the weight cutting season it goes against the requirement if a family member is indulging in a rich meal that the athlete cannot consume.

So, a parent by adapting to the guidelines and making it possible for the family setting can boost the morale of the athlete in helping him or her adhere to the suggested meal plan. In sports nutrition parent and the dietician shares a very very important equation as a protocol in younger children it is always best to work with either of the parent and the guardian for all consultations and communication. Having a parent involved in these sessions can help set clear objectives and thereby you can offer personalized or tailored diet plans. As I've said an athlete spends the most time with the coach for the training and even outside of training where they build a very strong bond with the coach. A coach not only offers training guidance for the

sports specific requirement but watches the athlete very closely and monitors the progress with a very intricate and strong bond between the coach and the athlete particularly in tournaments.

The coaches words can be very very motivating and support performance outcomes. A coach can offer constructive feedback and the timing of this feedback can also be very crucial in determining how the athlete perceives and executes the instruction. So, how can a sports dietician or nutritionist collaborate with the coach to improve eating habits in athletes? As I've said that the coach has a very special relationship with an athlete and he is on the epitome for an athlete. So, when the coach can reemphasize and reiterate nutritional guidelines offered the athlete by default is more open to adapting to certain dishes or nutrients. A coach can also have informal friendly chit chats with an athlete to ensure the suggestive plan is being followed.

So, by touching base with the coach and having discussions to track the outcomes of the planned meal options can help sports dietician or a nutritionist to align and integrate with the training goals set for that athlete for the specific season. By revisiting the objectives set forth and discussing with the coach can help to realign and adjust meal plans to retarget the goals or objectives of these several interconnections. Athlete is in the core or is the crux of these connections. The athlete also has a role to play for himself or herself to meet his athletic goals. Athletes are as much as human and can have several influences especially when it comes to food habits from performance driven goals to influences of friends as I mentioned the nutrition literacy of how much the athlete can comprehend and understand the science of nutrition to his mental abilities can shape the progress he makes around performance.

To take you back to the most important goal an athlete must channelize meal plan and training to support the overall holistic development and well-being. Some of the attributes of a successful athletes are being self-motivated to have the discipline to uphold the compliance towards the dietary habit or the training schedule to have resilience and bounce back when there are minor barriers and to be a team player and have a positive mindset towards growth can be helpful for the athlete to sustain his practices. To summarize, athletes overall development and well-being is the onus of several individuals and all stakeholders having athlete-centric goals and coaching aligns with tapping the best of an athlete's potential. Collaboration and integration among sports science team offers better outcomes and athletic performance success offering a positive and supportive environment bolsters holistic athlete development. I hope you had some takeaways from this lecture.

Thank you for listening. Hi my name is Samya. I'm 14 years old and I'm a competitor swimmer. Hi everyone my name is Ravi and I'm Samya's father. I started swimming at the age of six and I have represented the world in the world and I have represented Haryana in many national events for the past four years.

So Samya started competitive swimming at a very young age and it required us to make a lot of changes not just in her lifestyle but our lifestyle as well. Competitive swimming is a very demanding sport. It requires intense training, a good diet, good recovery, strength and conditioning and most of all a strong mind. I think every competitive sport requires a lot of commitment from the athlete and from the entire ecosystem around the athlete. Competitive swimming like any other competitive sport required us to really focus on various factors that would help her perform better right from her entire training schedule, the recovery pattern, ensuring that she is not having any undue pressures around her and we discovered the benefit

of a good diet only last year when we were in touch with Gita and I think that really propelled her level of swimming to a very very different level.

We could see remarkable changes in her the way the recovery was much faster, her strength got better and she started performing better at the competitions. As a parent, one believes that it's only the athlete that has to do all the hard work but I think as they say it takes a village to raise an athlete. As parents, we also have to play a very very important role. We have to walk the path with them. So right from the morning schedule training schedule which you know waking Samya up at 4 am taking her to the academy while I'm there ensuring the training is happening right, her mother at home is preparing all her diet, the lunch, the breakfast and then when she comes back home she leaves for school, she carries her meal plan with her.

The moment she's back from home, the mother is again ready with the next set of nutrition program and then the evening training program is taken care by her mom and thereafter you know the entire mental support the child needs because as the child is growing up there are lots of pressures, lots of distractions around the child and as parents it becomes extremely important to hear them out, to understand the changes that they're going through and at the same time to support them through those tough times. As parents when Samya started competitive swimming in Gurgaon, we realized due to the extreme weather conditions, training during winters was getting really tough and there was no heated pool where we were living and this is about six years back and you know we would go down to Delhi, the mother would drive down for an hour plus to take her to a heated pool during winters. We did that for two years and then we realized this is probably not sustainable and that's when you know we embarked on the journey of setting up our own academy where just not just Samya but there are other competitive swimmers in Gurgaon who were not getting the right infrastructure, the right coaching and we made that initiative, we took the initiative, we converted a pool into an all-weather pool and now these kids don't have to worry about going literally 30 kilometers away during winters to train but they have a center right next door and that has really helped us take the level of swimming up not just for Samya but for a lot of other athletes. That would not have been possible if as parents we had not decided to walk that path with the athlete and I think you know the only message I would want to give to everybody out there as fellow parents is that ensure that your child does one competitive sport at least while the child is growing up because it teaches a lot of things, it teaches the kids to stay honest, it teaches discipline, it teaches them you know how to lose in a gracious manner and then rise up so my message to all the parents is let's ensure that your child is into one competitive sport at least.

Thank you.