Looking for the latest sports nutrition news? Below are just a few highlights from the more than 3,000 research studies presented at the American College of Sports Medicine Annual Meeting in Boston, 2016 (www.ACSM.org).

• As we age, we lose muscle. Eating protein prior to sleep is a nutritional strategy that helps curb overnight muscle loss. When healthy 71 year-old men added resistance exercise in the evening, and then consumed 40 grams of bedtime casein, the overnight muscle-building response increased 31% compared to men who did not do evening exercise. Sounds like we should lift weights at night and then eat casein-rich cottage cheese?

• Soldiers who ate a protein-rich diet but not enough calories lost muscle during 4 days of hard military training. If you are training hard, you want to be sure to consume not only adequate protein but also adequate calories.

• If you think the more you exercise, the more weight you will lose, think again! Overfat middle-age adults who participated in a 12-month study saw no additional weight loss if they exercised for 250 minutes/week, as compared to those who exercised for 150 minutes. This suggests a compensatory response that thwarts fat loss.

{ad} • Do you burn many more calories by standing at a desk instead of sitting at your desk? No. Just standing increases energy expenditure by less than 10 calories per hour. But you might be less likely to gain weight if you include a brief 2-minute walk every 30 minutes. For example, you could walk to a printer down the hall, or take the stairs to use the upstairs bathroom.

• UCAN is a cornstarch supplement touted to increase fat burning and provide steady energy. In a study with trained cyclists who consumed either UCAN or sugar (glucose) before and during 1 hour of biking followed by intervals and then sprints, UCAN increased fat burning—but the cyclists did not perform any better.
• Can peppermint oil enhance performance? Yes, according to a study with weight lifters who took either peppermint oil or a peppermint flavored placebo 15 minutes before a 3-repetition max test. Their back squat increased from 268 to 284 lbs. and upper body strength from 218 to 246 lbs.

• Nutrition is one way to enhance performance. Training lung muscles is another tactic. After 3 weeks of training their respiratory muscles, college basketball players were able to perform better.

• Don’t like your body shape? Lifting weights can help you improve your body image. But please focus on being toned and muscular (not thin).

• If you plan to go “on a diet,” you want to focus not only on eating less and exercising more, but also getting adequate sleep. Being sleep deprived can reduce your desire to exercise and eat well.

• Women with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) have higher than usual male sex hormones which could be an advantage in terms of muscle strength and power. A pilot study with 8 sedentary women with PCOS and 10 controls (matched for BMI and activity level) suggests that the women with PCOS did, indeed, have increased muscle strength.

• Does stress contribute to menstrual disturbances in women? Yes, but the best predictor of menstrual disturbances (such as not ovulating or menstruating) is lack of fuel due to over-exercising or under-eating. Add in some stress, and the likelihood of a woman not ovulating can increase.

• The hulky body valued by football linemen may predispose them to sleep apnea—with the associated risks of heart disease and diabetes. If you are a heavy athlete who thinks you might have a sleep disorder, you might want to get a sleep assessment…
A survey with college women reported exercise helped them feel strong, energized, more powerful, determined, balanced, content, inspired, and unstoppable. Yes, those are the right reasons to exercise—as opposed to just burn off calories.

Athletes face many nutritional challenges, including reaching weight goals, having limited time to eat, and fueling during travel. If you need some help with managing your sports diet, choose to get help from a qualified sports dietitian (as opposed to your friends, family or coach). The referral network at SCANdpg.org can help you find a local expert.


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