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Plant Based Diets Impact on Athletic Performance

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ABSTRACT

Eating mostly plant-based meals is becoming popular with people all over the world. This trend is growing because research shows that plant-based diets are good for health, more people are worried about how traditional animal farming harms the environment, and many are becoming more aware of the ethical issues related to treating animals. Plant-based diets encompass a variety of eating patterns that prioritise foods sourced from plants, while reducing or eliminating the intake of animal products. There are different varieties of plant-based diets i.e. vegan diets, lacto-vegetarian diets, lacto-ovo vegetarian diets, Pescatarian diets and Flexitarian diets. Plant-based diets provide all the essential proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals needed for optimal health and are often rich in fibre and phytonutrients. While meat has traditionally been considered essential for athletic performance, there are several researches that examine the effects of plant-based diets on health, sustainability, and exercise performance.

A plant-based diet offers several benefits for athletes, including improved recovery, enhanced endurance, and sustained energy levels. Rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, it helps reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, promoting faster muscle recovery and less soreness after exercise. High levels of nitrates in vegetables like beets and spinach improve blood flow and oxygen delivery, boosting endurance, along with that plant plant-based diets naturally higher in carbohydrate content support efficient glycogen replenishment for prolonged activities. Additionally, focusing on whole grains and low-glycaemic foods stabilises blood sugar, providing consistent energy and preventing crashes during extended workouts. Plant-based diets are also known for their environmental health benefits. Based on current available literature, plant-based diets enhance athletic performance, lower chronic disease risk, and conserve resources.

Keywords: Flexitarian diets, Lacto-ovo vegetarian diets, Lacto vegetarian diets, Pescatarian diets, Vegan diets

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