

The Fueling Station

January 2012

It's all about ME!
Metabolic Efficiency that is...

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BOB'S CORNER

Welcome to 2012! I hope your holidays were exciting and you are now ready to take charge of the New Year with whatever goals you have set for yourself.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, we are devoting these next few issues to all things sports nutrition related for females.

This month, I thought I would spark the New Year with the topic of metabolic efficiency (ME). Many of us have new goals to reach and a good portion of them may center on nutrition. What a better way then to

learn (or re-ignite the fire about) the concept of metabolic efficiency.

Enjoy this month and get ready for the next few months when Dina explores even more female specific sports nutrition topics!

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Metabolic Efficiency for Athletes

Bob Seebohar, MS, RD, CSSD, CSCS

It's a new year and with that comes an opportunity to change your paradigm of thinking about nutrition. It is time to teach your body to use the right nutrients at the right times to improve your health and performance. How? Simple. It's all about improving your body's ability to use its abundant stores of fat and preserve its very limited carbohydrate stores. I will provide you some very simple nutrition implementation strategies to help you along this process.

Of course, I am not proposing a complete nutrition makeover. I believe that the more complex you make something, especially nutrition, the less likely you will follow it. If it's simple, it's sustainable.

What Is Metabolic Efficiency?

Efficiency is a term that is typically associated with sport. From a nutrition perspective, being metabolically efficient simply means being able to use the proper nutrients at the right times.

It is likely that you have heard of this scenario before as it applies to exercise: as you increase your intensity, your body prefers to use more carbohydrate and less fat for fuel. The physiological term for this is the crossover concept. With training you can manipulate this to essentially burn more fat during exercise but this article isn't about what we already know. It's about the relatively unknown effect of your daily intake of macronutrients and their impact on fuel utilization and metabolic efficiency.

Why Be More Metabolically Efficient?

I've been working with endurance athletes for many years and whenever I ask athletes about their goals for the short and long-term, I typically get the same two responses: lose weight/decrease body fat and get faster. I'll address mostly the first point since manipulating your body weight and composition in a favorable direction can have a positive impact on your performance.

The Carbohydrate Crisis

Carbohydrates are a staple in our eating plan and for good reason. They provide the energy that is needed to fuel the body (and brain) for training sessions. But during the some times of the year when you may not be training much, maintaining a higher carbohydrate eating plan can lead to weight and body fat gain. If you are in your preparatory (base) season right now and you do not have more than a 3 hour training session, then you do not need to supplement with extra carbohydrates. Wait until your energy expenditure increases as you increase your volume and intensity in the upcoming months.

Metabolic Efficiency for Athletes (cont.)

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We know that carbs are good but so are the other two macronutrients-protein and fat. Eating too much of any one macronutrient can lead to metabolic inefficiencies. Focus too heavy on one macronutrient and a state of imbalance occurs. Eat a combination of foods and you will remain in balance and not get thrown out of whack.

How To Become Metabolically Efficient

Your mission is to teach your body how to tap into your fat stores more efficiently.

These simple, easy to implement, nutrition steps will help in your quest to become more metabolically efficient, use more of your fat stores as energy and create a metabolic shift inside your body where it will learn how and when to use fat.

1. *Adopt a nutritional paradigm shift.* As you approach your food selection and preparation, prioritize your meals and snacks. First on the plate should be a source of lean protein and healthy, omega-3 rich fat. Second up is a healthy portion of fruits and/or vegetables. If you would like some whole grains, go ahead and add them in. However, if you are not training much, your body does not require a high amount of carbohydrates. You simply do not need that high of a carbohydrate load right now. Balancing your blood sugar is of utmost importance throughout the day.
2. *Follow the 90/10 rule.* Stay on track with these steps 90% of the time and allow yourself to “miss” the other 10% of the time. Remember, you are human and life happens. Don’t stress out if you have the occasional miss (sweets, alcohol, chips, etc.). Approach your nutrition plan as you do your training plan and allow some room to deviate. For example, if you miss having some fruit at lunch, no big deal. You still have at least 1-2 more chances to have that fruit that day or you can always start with a clean slate the next morning!

This shouldn’t be too difficult. It will take preparation, execution and commitment on your part. Remember, this is a behavior change that can take a few weeks to months to adopt. Start now and allow yourself some times where you will take a few steps backwards. It’s all part of the process of improving your nutrition plan!

Bob

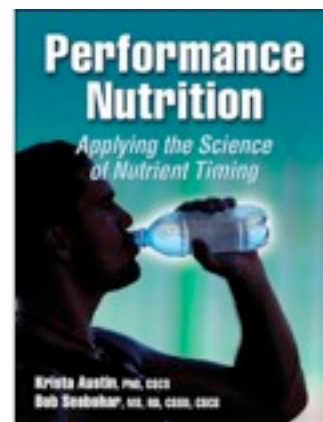
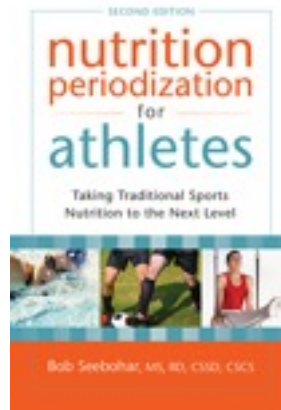
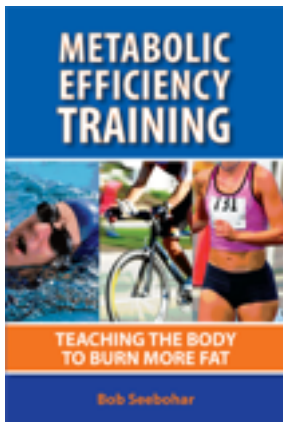
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