

Importance of Nutrition in Sports Nutrition: An Interview with Ms Shiny Chandran

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Abstract

Sports, they say, satiate many an insatiable athlete's sport's palate. If sport is bigger, then, sporting spirit is the biggest. Nutrition plays a vital role in the life of an athlete. Yet, we need to understand water is the most neglected nutrient. One of the most regularly heard about complaints with athletes is the lack of injury management techniques. For any athlete, it's a must to understand the limits of his / her body cope up with that and take food in time. Aka, timely food intake will solve many problems not only for athletes, for anyone. Taking timely food will allow one to maintain normal metabolism and will indirectly boost their mental confidence when they step up on the field of play. This short communication is nothing but an interview with a well-known sports nutritionist who goes by the name Ms Shiny Chandran.

Keywords: Sports; Nutrition; Fitness

Introduction

To the folk and flora and fauna in the field of sports, being healthy and fit is more than just apposite. Diet and Nutrition occupies the best seat in our soft palate in our journey and yomping to be fit and fine and healthy. As a swimmer and a hockey player who engages in the Left Half Back position, I've seen rough passages of time where I could hardly move my body, keep alone the ankle. It was then I've realized the importance of being stoic in this rough weather and tried gathering pace during my rehabilitation program. There, dear friends, I've met a sports nutritionist and a dietitian par excellence in the name of Ms Shiny Chandran, who has an indomitable expertise in the field of Food and Nutrition. She is one of India's rising Nutritionists of the modern-day.

Ms Shiny Chandran is a Level 2 - Kinanthropometrist, International Society for Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK) - New Zealand (2010). She is the First Indian to be certified with Graduate Diploma in Sports Nutrition from International Olympic Committee (2008) and also, Ms Shiny Chandran is an Accredited Sports Dietitian – Sports Dietitians Australia.

Come today, you'll find her busying herself by delivering lectures for corporates, students, and athletic groups and shares her expertise to budding scholars and students by her articles in magazines and journals of international recognition.

We are honored to have her us in the form of an educative interview.

1) Dear Ms Shiny Chandran, thank you for accepting our invitation to answer a few questions that, we believe, will help many a sportsman. Kindly take us through what motivated and encouraged you to take Nutrition as your career and profession.

I used to fall sick as a child, quite often. I was pretty fascinated by doctors and their power to heal. Slowly towards high school I realized the importance of eating right and its influence on enhancing immunity. I decided to study Nutrition and dietetics and pursued nutrition in Undergraduate and Post Graduate in this field. It's been 16 years practicing nutrition and helping people live healthier lives. During my post graduate study, one of our guest lecture was given was a leading sports physician in Chennai, South India. His lecture opened up mind to sports nutrition and realized it was a niche area of specialization and there were very few sports nutritionist in India back in 1997.

2) We understand, life's a journey of many an up and down, which we regularly endure. Kindly take us through how you've approached tough times and never swayed your focus and determination from pursuing your dreams.

To study sports nutrition, I had to travel abroad and that was expensive. I worked 10 - 12 hours a day to make extra money to pay my fee. The program offered by Sports dietitians Australia was held in Singapore in the year 2006. The 2 year IOC diploma in Sports Nutrition was 3 lakhs in 2007. I conducted workshops in corporates, worked with athletes in YMCA and served as a consultant in a fitness studio in order to educate myself. My dream was to be a little different from others, who became clinical dietitians or teachers in a University after their graduation. In fact, when I worked in fitness studio, my own fraternity didn't respect the work I was doing. It took several years for them to acknowledge my work.

As I started working I realized, fitness trainer, coaches and physiotherapist were all advising on diet! It was challenging to make your mark working with so many men who thought they knew it all. Only consistent work in this field has helped make a mark.

3) What perspectives and tactics do you follow in advising diet and nutrition counseling to a player who is physically down and is finding hard to find a position on the field?

I now work in a sports medicine centre housed inside a medical university. The team comprises of a sports physician, biomechanicist, psychologist, sports physiotherapist, strength and conditioning coach. It helps to do a comprehensive analysis and come together to help the athlete reach his goals. A systematic and thorough approach truly helps to offer the support for an athlete.

4) Is there any relation between the effect of good diet or say, timely diet and adequate nutrition on improving the mental confidence of an athlete? If so, please take us through that.

The importance of gut health, microbiome is so huge and impactful to the wellness of an individual and more so to an athlete to enhance performance without any hiccup. Gluten and lactose intolerance is seen in many athletes in India and modifying diet has improved energy levels to a great extent. Timing of nutrient intake has helped maximize recovery and also fuel after a good strength session in the gym or skill training program in the field.

Hydration has played a big role especially with warmer weather in South India, educating the athletes on hydration guidelines have been a game changer or missing link to sustained energy and performance.

5) As players, we have three seasons in our calendar year. Pre-season, playing time and post-season rest. What is the diet and nutrition to be followed during each season?

Pre-season: Intense practice sessions and volume of training being high, the emphasis is on high carbohydrate and moderate protein intake. The hydration guidelines are provided after considering the temperature in the city, humidity and the time of training.

Playing time: The timing of nutrient intake, hydration guidelines during sport, recovery nutrition gains a lot of importance during this phase. The protein and carbohydrate is more equal with lesser fat intake. The use of sport drink, educating on travel nutrition plays a big role during this phase.

Post season: Most athletes eat more and train little. So, counseling on the chances of quick weight gain help them to keep a count on calories and food choices they make on a daily basis. Being responsible with food and alcohol is vital in the post season.

6) We are usually confused and bewildered with the terms Dietitian and Nutritionist. What exactly is the subtle difference between those two?

Nutritionist works in a non – clinical set up like fitness / wellness studios, schools, colleges, community nutrition, corporates, industrial canteen/ kitchens etc. Dietitian works in a hospital with patients ranging from critically ill to outpatient services.

7) How do you keep yourself knowledgeable and updated with this ever changing field of science, as we understand research in this field is reaching heights like never before?

1. International journals with peer reviewed articles
2. Workshops
3. International conferences
4. Purchasing latest books
5. Reading blogs by experts.

8) Lastly, what are your future plans in nurturing many a young talent in the field Sports and Nutrition?

I have encouraging students of nutrition to specialize in sports nutrition. I give lectures for students on career counseling / conference, seminars by the dietetic associations where I convey the range of possibilities for a sports nutritionist. I have 2 trained staff right now in my private practice, which I would like to expand in the coming years.

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