

# THE RIGHT NUTRIENTS TO FUEL YOUR BODY

TEXT MICHELLE NG

**The Avenue catches up with Jaclyn Reutens, a clinical dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants, on the rising awareness of Sports Nutrition and how eating the right stuff powers you towards your sports goals.**

**TA: One of the services at your clinic is Sports Nutrition. Can you describe this in detail to us?**

**Jaclyn:** Sports Nutrition is meant for those who are physically active in any sport and wish to improve their performance through nourishing foods. We assess the baseline measurements of body fat, muscle mass, performance timings and set a goal for our clients. Using food as a tool, we develop a customised nutrition plan based on carbohydrates, protein, fats, vitamins, minerals, and fibre for our client to meet their goal.

**TA: Who are your customers?**

**Jaclyn:** Their ages range from 10 to 60 years old. The more common ones are runners, swimmers, tennis players, cyclists and team sports enthusiasts such as rugby players who have several matches during a day.

**TA: How do you see the diet factoring into one's overall fitness health?**

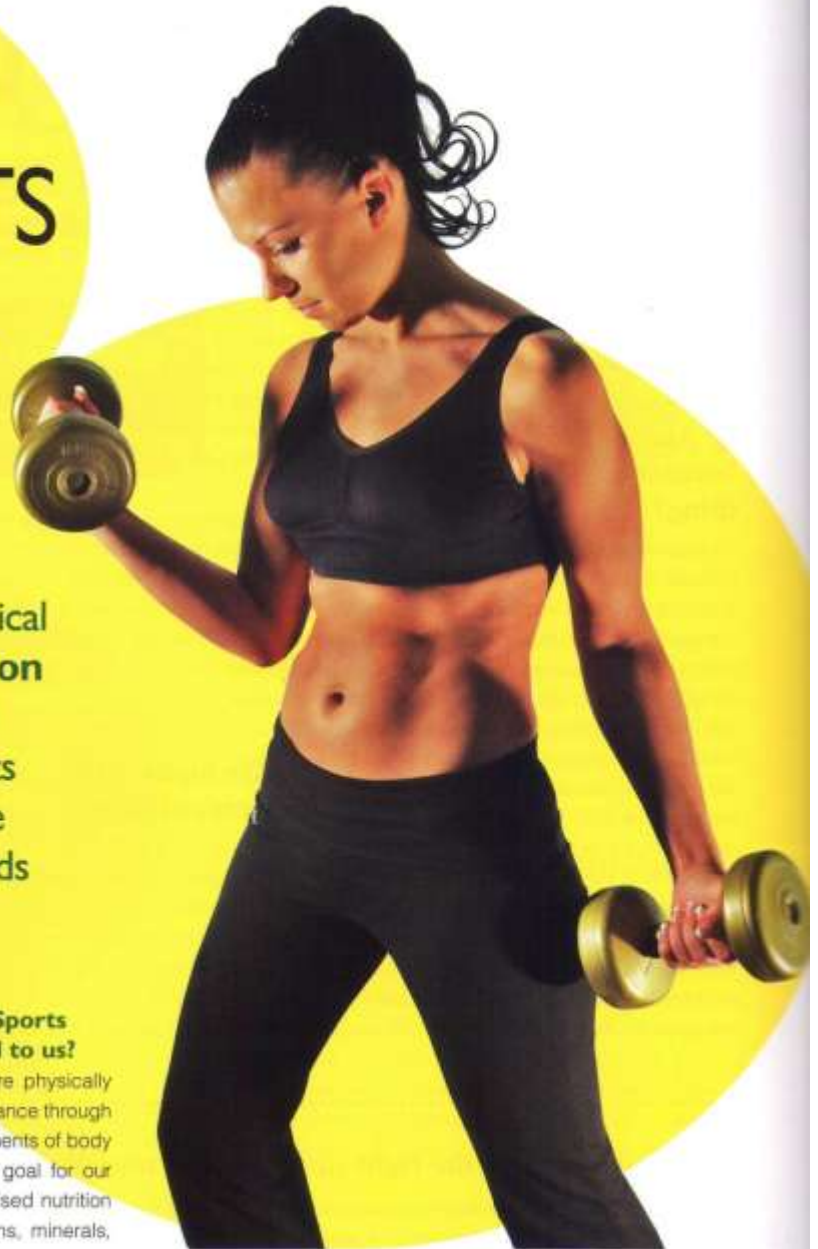
**Jaclyn:** Without sustenance, you will lack in strength and stamina. Food is the fuel that gives power to the car. The better and purer the fuel, the faster and smoother the drive.

**TA: Do you see Sports Nutrition catching on in Singapore, as compared to the Western countries?**

**Jaclyn:** Indeed, I have seen a sharp increase in the demand for Sports Nutrition in the last five years. We still have a long way to catch up with our Western counterparts and we are constantly learning from them. Sports Nutrition is a science that evolves and improves, we can only stand to gain from our more experienced neighbours.

**TA: What are the factors that are taken into account when customising someone's diet?**

**Jaclyn:** We have to take into consideration things like:



• **Nature of the sport:** Does it involve intermittent sprints such as soccer or is it a sport that has less movement like archery and weight lifting?

• **Training:** The diet has to meet the nutrient needs of the training sessions for better performance.

• **Personal preferences:** Do they have religious restrictions? Are they vegetarians? If so, what type of vegetarianism do they practise?

• **Current nutritional status of the individual:** Does he/she need to lose body fat?

• **Goal of the individual:** Carbohydrate loading or to maintain lean body mass?

• **Lifestyle:** What are the foods readily available and what works within their budget? The diet has to be practical to facilitate adherence.

**TA: Are things like energy bars and isotonic drinks part of the nutritional intake you advise people to take? Do they act as efficient replacements for meals or water?**

**Jaclyn:** Yes, they are. They supplement the current diet to meet electrolyte, energy, and fluid needs. They can replace water but they cannot replace meals because they generally do not contain sufficient amounts of fibre and protein that is found in fruit, vegetables and meat.

**TA: What are some of the food products around us that are readily available for the good of our health?**

**Jaclyn:** Wholegrain foods like wholemeal bread, brown rice, and wholegrain cereals are great for sustained energy. The fibre present in them is good for regular bowel movements (which are important for athletes psychologically) and help to decrease the risk of diseases.

Low fat dairy products such as milk, cheese, and yoghurt offer high biological value protein and readily absorbed calcium to sportsmen. After sustaining injuries which unfortunately, does happen, these foods are great nutrient boosters and assist the healing process.

Fruit and vegetables offer a myriad of vitamins and minerals that assist the body cells needed for repair, protection, and for electrolyte balance to prevent cramping.

**TA: Please share some of the more interesting nutrition programmes you have drawn up for your clients.**

**Jaclyn:** I have done many carbohydrate loading programmes for my athletes preparing for triathlons and full marathons. You cannot imagine the amount of food they have to consume. They are, in reality, eating full size meals every two to three hours. Weight gain is desired as you are preparing your body for "war".

Then, there is the complete opposite where I had to drastically decrease the calorie intake of athletes who carried around excess body fat. It went from their usual 3000kcal diet to 1500kcal diet. Once they become lean, I amped up their calorie intake gradually to meet their training needs. They did "suffer" during the big drop but it needed to be done. Please note that this can only be done under expert supervision.

**TA: What is your personal philosophy to food?**

**Jaclyn:** Your diet can make or break you physically and psychologically. What you eat is a choice that you make several times a day. There is no food you need to completely avoid but be sensible in your decisions. **TA**

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