

Researcher helps draft 'historic' position paper on nutrition and athletic performance

February 25 2016

An assistant professor in the UK College of Health Sciences is the lead author on a paper that is being hailed as the most important single source of information in the field of sports nutrition to date.

The [position statement](#), released jointly by the American College of Sports Medicine, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, and the Dietitians of Canada, represents an evidence-based analysis and synthesis of more than eight years of relevant nutritional research on important dietetic practice questions, including fluid and nutrient intake, nutrition strategies for exercise recovery, and the use of performance-enhancing supplements.

Travis Thomas, Ph.D., RDN, CSSD, LD, of the University of Kentucky's College of Health Sciences, directed the effort with more than a dozen representatives from the three organizations.

"This is the most comprehensive directive on nutrition and athletic performance currently available, representing our collective evidence-based stance on nutrition factors that influence athletic performance and emerging trends in the field of sports nutrition," Thomas said.

Thomas emphasized the need for this position paper in light of the proliferation of information available to athletes and the people who help them.

"Sports nutrition is a dynamic area of science, and with the growing

amount of information available naturally comes inconsistency and confusion," he said. "These three organizations felt it was time to identify themes, synthesize data, and streamline information for the benefit of athletes and the professionals who work with them."

Indeed, Thomas notes that the nutrition goals and requirements for athletes are not static and must account for day to day changes that athletes experience (training vs. competition, during periods of injury and/or illness), the varied nutritional needs by sport (gymnasts vs. runners, for example), and even special populations and environments (vegetarian athletes, high altitude competition).

Significant points of the position paper include:

- Calorie, nutrient, and fluid recommendations for active adults and competitive athletes vary before, during and after exercise.
- New perspectives on [sports nutrition](#) include individualized recommendations that accommodate the unique issues of individual athletes regarding health, nutrient needs, performance goals, physical characteristics (body size, shape, and composition) and food preferences.
- Optimal health and athletic performance may be affected by the appropriate type, amount, and timing of food, fluid and supplement choices across different scenarios of training and competitive sports.
- The availability of foods and supplements promoted as athletic performance enhancers is burgeoning, but sound evidence supporting their efficacy and safety is often lacking. The Australian Institute of Sport has developed a classification system that ranks sports foods and supplement ingredients based on significance of scientific evidence and whether a product is safe, legal, and effective in improving sports performance. Supplement use is best undertaken as an adjunct to a well-chosen

nutrition plan and is rarely effective outside these conditions.

The bottom line, Thomas said, is that registered dietitians who are board certified as a specialist in sports dietetics are as integral to an athlete's team as a coach or personal trainer.

"We have the education, training, and experience necessary to ask the right questions and identify the best nutrition plan for an athlete, taking into account the myriad factors that affect an athlete's performance," Thomas said.

According to Scott Lephart, Ph.D., dean of the university's College of Health Sciences, the work performed by Thomas and his colleagues has the potential for international impact.

"This position statement is thorough, synthesizing an unprecedented breadth and depth of data for the benefit of athletes world-wide, and Dr. Thomas' appointment to lead the group is an honor both for him personally and for the College of Health Sciences," Lephart said.

Thomas' work on nutrition and [athletic performance](#) will be part of a larger effort at the college called the UK Sports Science Research Institute, which will look into [nutrition](#) and other factors that enhance performance and prevent injury in athletes of all ages and the tactical [athletes](#) of the US Special Forces.

Provided by University of Kentucky

Citation: Researcher helps draft 'historic' position paper on nutrition and athletic performance (2016, February 25) retrieved 29 April 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-02-historic-position-paper-nutrition-athletic.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.