

Training Tip #14

Diabetic and Vegetarian Diets

Food is the fuel that you need to train for the Susan G. Komen 3-Day®. If you are a diabetic or a vegetarian it is important to choose the right kind of fuel to keep your weight down and your energy up.

Walking is a great exercise if you are a diabetic. It is helpful in lowering your weight and your blood sugar. If you are on medication such as insulin or sulfonylureas, you are at risk for low blood sugar during or after exercise. It is important to monitor your blood sugar and your caloric intake. If your blood sugar is <100 mg/dl before exercise you may need to eat a carbohydrate snack. Talk to your doctor about changing your medication or food needs if you experience very high or low blood sugar with exercise, especially if you are trying to lose weight. The foods listed below can provide a foundation to build a healthy eating plan.

1. Aim to eat a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables daily.
2. Eat leaner protein sources such as chicken breast without the skin, light meat turkey, fish and soy. Protein is important for maintaining the muscle strength and mass of your body.
3. Try eating a whole-grain breakfast cereal, whole-grain breads, whole-wheat pasta or brown rice. Studies have shown that those who eat the recommended 25-35 grams of fiber daily are less likely to be overweight.
4. Sports drinks are useful to decrease dehydration while exercising. Consuming sugar-free juices (i.e., Crystal Light or Kool Aid) and snacks containing salt can accomplish the same goal.

In order for vegetarian diets to support optimal athletic performance, it is important to incorporate an adequate amount of protein into your daily diet. Many people believe that following a vegetarian diet means they automatically will lose weight. This is not necessarily the case as many vegetarians inadvertently have a high fat intake based on whole-fat dairy products, butter, eggs, cheeses, nuts and seeds. Below are some tips for following a healthy vegetarian diet to help lose weight, maintain an optimal protein intake and support your training walks:

1. Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products or low-fat fortified soy products.
2. Build your protein around legumes, tofu and tempeh.
3. Watch serving sizes on nuts and seeds; they are full of healthy fat but are very concentrated in calories.
4. Avoid fried foods and choose those that are baked, broiled, or steamed.
5. Add protein powder to shakes or cereal if you are not getting enough.
6. Increase your bean intake; they are high in protein and fiber.
7. Add soy products to your diet.
8. Limit snacks that are high in sugar and fat.
9. Flavor foods with salsa, lemon juice and vinegars instead of high-fat condiments like butter, mayonnaise and high-fat dressings.

Certain vitamins and minerals such as iron, riboflavin (vitamin B2), vitamin B12, calcium and zinc must be consumed in adequate amounts. These typically are found in animal-based foods. Fortified soymilks are great for boosting calcium and vitamin B12. Eggs are also a great source of B12. Outstanding iron sources include fortified breakfast cereals, bread, textured vegetable protein, legumes, dried beans, nuts, dried fruit and green leafy vegetables. Eating rich sources of vitamin C with meals will help enhance iron absorption.