

Vegan diet in Health, Fitness and Sports: Benefits to adolescents and athletes- lessons to be learned to improve individual health

Katharina C Wirnitzer

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Vegan diets are booming in the mainstream and in sport. According to the Forbes magazine and The Economist, the vegan movement is forecasted to keep on growing in 2019 with the younger generations are the key drivers of this global shift towards a healthier and more sustainable relationship with food.

Health above all is the most basic prerequisite for human development and becoming a successful athlete. Vegan diets are appropriate for all ages, and athletes, too. However, despite the sound health benefits, vegans of all ages but vegan athletes in particular, are frequently faced with prejudice on unsubstantiated grounds. From current sporting success all the way back to ancient times, it is evident that vegans can win races up to professional levels and even break records. At the same time, data on veganism related to sports is sparse. Findings from our laboratory has been published over the past decade, show that a vegan diet is compatible with endurance performance and to contribute most beneficially to an athletes' health.

Therefore, this keynote sheds light on a highly underestimated body of evidence still mostly neglected (inclusive the potential benefits-risks-ratio by looking at the myths about meat). In presenting relevant information for both experts and practitioners in the field of sports, it combines scientific rationale from evidence-based data with anecdotal information, in order to support a more healthy approach to individual health and sports nutrition counseling of young people and competitive athletes.

The knowledge about the various advantages of vegan diets on health and sports performance has the potential to encourage athletes and their families, coaches, and experts in health, nutrition and sports, decision makers, multipliers and role models in sports and school settings, to be more open-minded when a pupil, student or an athlete expresses his/her desire to adopt a vegan diet.

e: katharina.wirnitzer@ph-tirol.ac.at

 Notes: