FAD DIET CONFUSION

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The goal of a fad diet is weight reduction. Fad Diets may eliminate at least one essential food group, or may recommend a type food or food group in excess.

- Intended to produce results too quickly compared to a traditional diet program.

Not all diets are appropriate for every population and this is especially true of an athlete in training. The special needs of an athlete include:

- Higher carbohydrate needs.
- Higher protein needs.
- Higher caloric needs due to training and higher amount of lean mass.
- Frequent fueling before training and post-workout recovery nutrition.

PROS & CONS OF FAD DIETS

**PROS**

- Provides rules, making it easy to follow.
- Provides structure to any unstructured eating pattern.
- Usually faster results.
- Some of these may be too large and too fast because of the extreme nature/change of some diets.

**CONS**

- May eliminate one or more essential food groups or nutrients: carbohydrates, grains, most produce, fat, dairy products, or red meat.
- Usually reduces weight too quickly, causing a loss of muscle.
- Often not sustainable, causing weight re-gain after diet is discontinued.
- May also lead to more weight gain than initially lost.
- Severe restriction of certain foods can put many at risk for binge eating over time.
- Recommends an overconsumption of a type of food to replace others.
- Regimen that is extreme in nature.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS FOR ATHLETES

**LOW CARBOHYDRATE CONSUMPTION:**

- Poor energy levels during activity.
- Depletion of glycogen stores, leading to worsening fatigue and increased injury risk.
- Increased risk of cramping due to inability to retain water & inadequate energy intake.
- Poor focus, mood, and cognition related to the brain not being properly fueled.
  - The brain relies on carbohydrates only for fuel.
  - Absolute minimum amount of carbohydrates for a non-athlete to consume daily = ~130g (**Brain requires ~130g of carbohydrates to function**).
  - Athletes need to fuel both their brain and their training, and therefore will require much more than 130g of carbohydrates.

**LOW SODIUM CONSUMPTION:**

- Increased risk of cramping from a decrease in water retention and poor sodium replenishment.
  - Sodium is the electrolyte lost most in sweat and in greatest need of replenishment.
- Impaired muscle function from inadequate balance of sodium and potassium.

**FASTING PERIODS:**

- Training with low energy levels, leading to poor performance and risk of syncope (fainting and/or drop in blood pressure).
- Depletion of glycogen stores over time if muscles do not receive recovery nutrition.
- Difficult to obtain sufficient calories during shorter feeding windows, which may lead to weight and/or lean tissue loss.
- Body adapts to burning fewer calories and storing fat, which may set the body up for regain of body weight, especially fat mass.
- Lean tissue breakdown.
- Poor focus, mood, and cognition.
## EXAMPLES OF FAD DIETS

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<tr>
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<th>PALEO DIET</th>
<th>GLUTEN-FREE DIET</th>
<th>INTERMITTENT FASTING</th>
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<td><strong>PREMISE:</strong></td>
<td>Mimics foods eaten by our “hunter-gather” ancestors.</td>
<td>Medical nutrition diet used to treat celiac disease. This should only be used if celiac disease has been diagnosed.</td>
<td>Periodic fasting aiming to curve hunger, which ultimately restricts calories due to shortened feeding window.</td>
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| **PRINCIPLES:**        | • Low carbohydrates: Non-starchy fruits & vegetables making up 35-45% of daily calories.  
• Higher protein.  
• Higher potassium, lower sodium.  
• Moderate to higher fat intake (Mostly omega-3 and omega-6).                                                                                                   | • Celiacs must avoid gluten-containing foods: Bread, pasta, cereals, soups, sauces, baked goods, malt, etc.  
• To protect small intestine from damaging autoimmune response that occurs in celiacs who consume gluten.  
• Rice products do not contain gluten.                                                                 | • Includes different variations of fasting.  
• Drawing out the overnight fast for a specified period of time (16-36 hours) and narrowing the feeding window to 4-12 hours.                                                                                                                                         |
| **POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR THE ATHLETE:** | • Promotes healthy fats.  
• Promotes fruit & vegetable consumption.  
• May decrease body weight and/or body fat %.                                                                                                                                            | • Able to alleviate symptoms of those with celiac disease. This should only be used if a gluten allergy is present.  
• May decrease body weight and/or body fat %.  
• Elimination of many refined grains, and flour-based sweets (i.e. cookies, cakes, etc.).                                                                 | • May decrease body weight and/or body fat %.  
• May provide a different type of structure/change that motivates a person temporarily.                                                                                                                        |
| **POTENTIAL PITFALLS FOR ATHLETE:** | • Favors low carbohydrate consumption.  
• Favors low sodium consumption.  
• Restricts many fruits/veggies = inadequate carbs.  
• Very restrictive & expensive for college athletes w/ limited $ and time.                                                                                           | • May be hard to meet carbohydrate needs through limited gluten-free food choices.  
• Possible nutrient deficiencies if not replacing nutrients found in whole grain/gluten-containing foods.                                                                                                                          | • Would require athlete to train while fasting such as a Muslim athlete during Ramadan.  
• Inability for proper muscle recovery during fasting periods.  
• Could potentially be dangerous if athletes have morning practice – risk of syncope.                                                                                                                                 |
| **EXAMPLE BREAKFAST:** | 3 eggs, 2 tbsp. olive oil, parsley, 1 grapefruit, Herbal tea.  
560 calories, 30g carbs, 21g protein, 40g fat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 2 cups Rice Chex cereal, 1 cup 1% milk, 1 banana, 1 oz. walnuts.  
645 calories, 99g carbs, 18g protein, 19g fat.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Most fast days/times won’t include breakfast as they continue the fast from sleep.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |