

## Module 10 Lesson 12

### Transcript

Today we're focusing on a sweet little subgroup that I get a lot of questions about. Vegetarian athletes. Vegetarianism and plant based eating in general are becoming more and more popular. I have a lot of clients come to me looking to go more plant-based, whether that be simply adding in veggies to going all the way vegan. They have their reasons for opting for a more veggie based lifestyle and the strongest ones I hear the most often are usually environmental concerns, health benefits, and some are just flat out grossed out by the meat industry. Today we're focusing our discussion on how plant based eating relates to athletes. In this lesson I'm going to cover what exactly is the difference between being plant-based versus being vegetarian or vegan, and how to help your athlete clients living a more plant based lifestyle and eat a more plant based diet, whatever that means to them.

Let's get started. People interpret plant-based in many different ways. The spectrum is huge in terms of how people use this term. I've had clients who are vegan and raw food movement people who call themselves plant-based. I've had carnivores who only eat organic, free range, grass fed meats, call themselves plant-based. I've even had people who are just trying to eat more veggies and less processed foods but still eat any kind of meat, call themselves plant-based. You really want to clarify with your client what they do or do not eat in their plant-based mission, if someone tells you they are a plant-based eater. The actual definition of plant-based eating means eating a diet that is mostly derived from plants. It means more fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains and legumes less, but by no means, no meat or dairy at all. I'm a big believer that you can be really healthy and not eat any meat or dairy if you're not just plant-based but you're vegetarian or vegan, even for athletes.

I eat good quality sources of meat and dairy, but you don't have to in order to have a completely healthy diet. Plant-based eating, including strict veganism and vegetarianism is definitely gaining popularity and attention. It's also becoming somewhat of the norm to see people looking for more plant-based foods and they're even spotlighted in the supermarket and at restaurants and your friend may even host a plant-based dinner party, but just like regular omnivores get sick of their food sometimes it can be hard for the plant-based eater to stay creative with their cooking. Besides that, we all know prepping vegetables can be time consuming. This is why it just may take some extra planning and special attention for the athlete to get this right. So many strict vegetarians and vegans wind up eating processed foods because that may be all that's available for them or they just aren't aware of foods that may provide better nutrients for them.

Think about your vegan, vegetarian, and plant-based clients watching Sunday football at the pub. The only things they may be able to eat on the menu are cheese quesadillas for those vegetarians, fries, mozzarella sticks or onion rings. Tennis star Venus Williams is vegan. Olympic skier Heather Mills eats plant-based and Woman's World surfing champ Tia Blanco has been eating meat free for years. Accomplished men are also animally abstaining and I'm talking big names like Mike Tyson and Carl Lewis. As with all vegans and vegetarians, the two nutrients we're going to want to pay the closest attention to for potential deficiencies are iron and B12, which we've covered in more detail in the first round of TNS. So here are some top tips for your plant-based vegan or vegetarian clients with exercise, sport and athletic goals in mind. So let's go. Come up with sample, no brainer plant-based staples to organize meals and snacks just like you do for all your clients.

Recommendations should have many well spaced, tried and true meals and snacks. Stick to whole foods, avoid processed and fake alternatives as much as possible because they're filled with garbage. Be extremely diligent with this group about looking at ingredient lists and build a solid foundation that can be made interesting every day by swapping flavors and textures even. Fruits and seasonings all help you do this. So if you have oatmeal, for example, as a meal, make sure to have all kinds of flexible toppings available such as different fats, which can be varied in the form of nuts, coconut, nut butters, seeds, flax, even avocado. You get the idea. Add different fruits, which can also come in any form imaginable and consider things like matcha and cacao powder, cinnamon, and turmeric to make the simple bowl of oatmeal different every single day. Find fast solutions for days when there isn't time to prep and cook.

A well stocked pantry needs to be loaded with staples like canned beans, vegetable broth, quinoa, nuts, tofu, dried mushrooms, soups, and a freezer full of quality garden burgers and high quality grains. There are high quality frozen meals and plant-based brands, so find those that you personally like and don't be afraid to say to your client that they should always have your favorite freezer burrito at the ready. Be a recipe resource. I always give my plant-based clients, especially at least two recipes for each meal that are super easy but tried and true. Things like a specific smoothie or even snacks like granola or a to die for dip that they could pair with raw veggies and they can even bring with them to a social function if they fear they won't have anything to bring with them and nothing to eat there. Do what you do best.

Come up with a plan that honors the client's goals, existing behaviors, lifestyle, and of course, in this population they're training. You may want to include what to order from some favorite restaurants or what to plan for in a pub situation that I spoke of earlier. Here's an example of a plan I made for a 30 year old vegetarian triathlete for her week before a competition. Breakfast

was homemade chia pudding made with coconut milk, cacao powder, and raspberries and topped with walnuts. She also sometimes had homemade granola with almond milk and blueberries. Her morning snack was almonds and dried apricots or peanut butter and a granny smith apple. Lunch was a big spinach salad with a black bean burger and a half an avocado and usually tomatoes, onions, and cucumbers with some kind of a vinaigrette dressing with maybe a little lemon juice as well. Or she'd have a big lentil soup, some Mary's Gone Crackers and guacamole and an apple on the side too.

In the afternoon she'd have maybe some carrots and hummus or an edamame bean and corn salad. Dinner, tofu, stir fry over brown rice or soba noodles with a green salad and a sesame dressing or a burrito bowl with guacamole. After dinner, she likes chocolate dipped bananas or popcorn with nutritional yeast. Remember, have your athletes try all of their recommended meals and snacks several times before any competition and there should be a good wheelhouse of foods established that your client knows will work for her or him before any intense exercise workload.

So let's review the key points before we wrap things up here. It is possible to meet all your carbohydrate, protein, fats, and antioxidant needs even in a plant-based diet, even if you're an athlete. My top tips for helping athletes stick with a plant based diet are incorporating foods your client loves, of course, and recommending well spaced meals and snacks, sticking to whole foods, building a solid foundation, and adding a variety through spices and different types of toppings. Finding fast solutions for busy days, stocking the pantry with vegan and vegetarian staples, and don't forget to give your client recipes that may help them on a day to day basis. Build a lifestyle plan that honors all of your client's goals. This should give you a good foundation when working with plant-based eaters, including vegetarian or vegan clients that are athletes. I'll see you in the next lesson.