

## **Fuelling the female athlete: bridging the gap from recommendations to changing behaviour**

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The ergogenic effects of high carbohydrate (CHO) availability on exercise performance are well documented and established within the literature. Nonetheless, a recent research audit established that only 11% of the participants involved in studies on "acute CHO availability and performance" were women. As such, the current CHO guidelines for athletic populations are largely based on males. Notwithstanding this sex bias, it is premature to suggest that the effects of the menstrual cycle, contraceptive use and sex specific metabolic responses to exercise necessitate that female athletes require "different" CHO guidelines. Rather, it is suggested that sports nutrition practitioners should focus their efforts on athlete education to address the culture of "carbohydrate fear" that may surround nutrition practices amongst female athletes. In using professional soccer as a case example, this presentation will provide a framework to fuelling the female athlete that focuses on 1) assessing athlete demographics, 2) assessing energy requirements and habitual energy intakes and 3) bridging the gap from recommendations to changing behaviour.