Nutrition for Athletes with Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

Athlete Scenario

I'm a basketball player and have recently been diagnosed with GERD. I experience symptoms of acid reflux every time I practice or have a game. My symptoms worsen with strenuous exercise. What diet changes can I make to help control my symptoms and perform better?

Understanding GERD in Athletes

- Symptoms of GERD may include: acidic taste in the mouth, chest pain, difficult/painful swallowing, throat irritation, coughing, heartburn, regurgitation, or a lump in the throat.
- Although GERD affects athletes and non-athletes alike, some athletes have an increased risk of symptoms including: runners, weightlifters, cyclists, triathletes, rowers, gymnasts, cheerleaders, football players, and surfers.

Strategies for Athletes with GERD

- To help alleviate symptoms, temporarily limit exercise or reduce your intensity.
- Keep a food record and symptom log to help identify problematic foods and activities.
- Consume smaller meals, sip fluids between meals instead of drinking large quantities with meals, and remain upright for at least 2 hours after eating. Practice pre-fueling strategies to identify the optimal time before exercise that meals and snacks can be eating without side effects.
- Avoid gastric irritants as they tend to make reflux worse (see table below).

Common Gastric Irritants
• Alcohol • Caffeine-containing foods & beverages (e.g. coffee, tea, chocolate) • Carbonated beverages • Citrus • Fried and other high-fat foods • Garlic • Onion • Peppermint / Spearmint • Spicy foods • Tomato products

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Tips to Take With You

1. Meal timing is crucial! Find an eating pattern that controls your symptoms but keeps you well fueled.
2. Work with your doctor to manage options for over-the-counter and prescription medications along with dietary changes.
3. Keeping a food and symptoms log (including type, quantity, and time of meals/snacks) and working with a sports registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help identify foods that may be triggering reflux symptoms.

Contact SCAN

www.scandpg.org
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Written by SCAN registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) to provide nutrition guidance. The key to optimal meal planning is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing
"Find a SCAN Dietitian" at www.scandpg.org