

The vegetarian runner's dilemma

Dear Dr. Julie, I am training for a marathon and I've been feeling really exhausted after my training sessions. What would you recommend that I change in my diet? I am mostly a vegetarian but I occasionally will eat seafood for protein intake.



I APPLAUD YOU

for wanting to maintain an active lifestyle because our bodies are made to move.

Studies show that staying active is good

for our body and our emotional and mental well-being. Still, your body is a machine and needs to be well fueled to maintain high levels of activity. As a mostly vegetarian eater, you should try to incorpo-

rate plant-based lean proteins into your daily diet before training, as well as complex whole grain carbohydrates in order to fuel your body for intensive work outs.

I recommend plant-based proteins such as legumes and nuts; and healthy fats such as olive oil, nuts, flaxseed, and fish. Whole grain carbohydrates such as steel-cut oatmeal and brown rice in moderate quantities with plenty of diverse-coloured vegetables will ensure fuel with essential vitamins and minerals.

Do not drink a lot of caffeine on a daily basis since it may dehydrate you—perhaps

green tea in the mornings for low levels of caffeine. The vitamins and antioxidants in green tea will help with cellular repair after long training days. Water is essential to ward off fatigue after a long day of training.

Ensure adequate sleep and rest to allow your body and muscles to heal after training. Cellular regeneration and repair is optimal during night-time sleep.

Avoid processed foods, sugars and alcohol. They diminish optimal cellular functioning and may slow down regeneration.

Aim for optimal nutrients before and after training sessions. When you treat your body like the high-functioning machine it is designed to be, your body is likely to perform as one. **Z**

Dr. Julie T. Chen, MD, is an integrated medical doctor with her own practice in San Jose, CA. Check out her website at www.makinghealthyez.com.

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