

How Vegan Diets Affect Your Workouts

CORY STIEG

JUNE 14, 2019, 2:40 PM





PHOTO: GUALTER FATIA/GETTY IMAGES.

During Tuesday's blowout [record-breaking World Cup game](#), U.S. forward, Alex Morgan, scored five goals, helping the U.S. Women's National Team clinch the victory 13-0 over Thailand. Morgan is definitely one of the stars to [watch this World Cup](#). Whether you're a soccer player or just an awe-struck spectator, you might be wondering how on earth Morgan accomplishes these superhuman feats.

Of course, professional athletes have highly specific training routines that allow them to perform at their peak potential. But in a recent interview with [Time](#), Morgan revealed that switching to a vegan diet has been key to her success on the field. She first [adopted a vegan diet](#), "because it didn't feel fair to have a dog I adore, and yet eat meat all the time," she told [Reuters](#). She soon discovered that eating a plant-based diet improved her energy during practice and games.

ADVERTISEMENT

Morgan certainly isn't the first high-profile athlete to praise a vegan diet; everyone from [Venus Williams](#) to [Colin Kaepernick](#) have spoken about the so-called benefits before. But is this a side

effect of the overall trend toward veganism, or could going vegan actually help your workout routine?

Currently, no research has shown that vegan or vegetarian eating patterns improve athletic performance compared to omnivorous eating, explains [Tanya Halliday](#), PhD, professor in the department of health, kinesiology, and recreation at the University of Utah. "Importantly though, they do not appear to decrease athletic performance either," she adds.

We know that athletes who exercise at a very high intensity, often multiple times a day, require more [calories](#) (aka energy), [carbohydrates](#), [protein](#), and fat to support their training loads, Dr Halliday says. The specific amount that a given person needs, as well as when they eat, can depend on the type of activity they're doing, and the level of their activity, she adds. A [strict dietary pattern](#), such as a vegan diet, obviously limits your food choices, which can make it challenging, she says.

"Cutting out whole food groups eliminates potential sources of nutrients found within those foods," explains [Jason Machowsky](#), RD, CSSD, RCEP, CSCS, board certified sports dietician and exercise physiologist at the Hospital for Special Surgery. "So, it becomes especially important that people who choose to restrict food groups for personal or health reasons seek out those nutrients in the foods that they choose to eat." That might mean making an effort to eat small [protein-packed snacks](#) throughout the day, consuming fruits and vegetables with two meals per day, and hydrating to replace lost fluids from a day of training, he adds. "Endurance athletes who train hard should not avoid [simple sugars and electrolytes](#) around training times," he says.

ADVERTISEMENT



If you're curious about whether going vegan could result in similar performance benefits for your own workouts, then Dr. Halliday suggests first examining your reasons for going vegan. In Morgan's case, she said she went vegan for ethical reasons, which many people do. "If the reasons are solely to improve performance or in an effort to lose weight by limiting types of foods — and therefore total calories — consumed, then a vegan diet is probably not appropriate," Dr. Halliday says. Also, consider how reliant you currently are on animal products. "Identify replacement meals without animal products, which still meet nutrient needs," she suggests.

For athletes contemplating a vegan lifestyle, it's important to work with a registered dietitian (one who is certified as a specialist in sports dietetics, aka "CSSD," is ideal), who can collaboratively develop a meal plan that is vegan and supports overall health and athletic performance, Dr. Halliday says. Additionally, it's a good idea to schedule a checkup with your primary care physician or healthcare provider about three to six months after making the change, to make sure your body is handling it well internally, Machowsky says. "I would suggest seeing your physician again a year later, as well, as some nutrient deficiencies can take longer periods of time to reveal themselves." And if you have a big race or game coming up — like, say, the World Cup — then you might want to wait until after to make the lifestyle switch, Dr. Halliday says.

At the end of the day, the key to Morgan's success is much more complicated than just the particular diet she eats. "When athletes believe a certain eating pattern is the cause of improved performance, it is likely more do to a combination of a greater focus placed on nutrition as well as a solid training program," Dr. Halliday says. For example, paying attention to your diet might make you aware of meal timing around training and competitions, proper fueling during training and competition, recovery nutrition, and general healthful eating habits, she says. Those are all good things to think about that don't require a restrictive diet, either.

And, given how Morgan has shined this World Cup, we have a feeling she'd still slay regardless of what she eats.



BODY • FITNESS • HEALTH TRENDS

WRITTEN BY

CORY
STIEG

PHOTO: GUALTER FATIA/GETTY IMAGES.

1 Person Reacted

How Do You Feel About This Article?



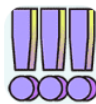
Love

0



Impressed

4



Surprised

0



Angry

0


Ad

GOTHAM
DEPENDE DELES

SÓ POR
R\$ **34,90**
/MÊS*


HBOmax
TEM PRA TODO MUNDO

ASSINE AGORA



DISPONÍVEL AGORA

Vão encontrar a verdade

 HBO MAX [Assine Agora](#)

AdChoices 

Sponsored

Start a discussion, not a fire. Post with kindness.

Commenting as **Guest**

 [Log in](#) | [Sign up](#)



What do you think?



Sort by **Best** ▾



MAGICCASH



14 June, 2019

I think some people are just genetically geared to be vegan. For me it was an immediate and easy transition.

Reply ·  7  · [Share](#)



ALICENYC



5 July, 2019

The author is too funny. As an obvious non-vegan, she would do well to have a professional help her examine her own diet for “nutritional deficiencies,” as non-vegans or more likely to experience this rare, even mythical, thing. she doesn’t seem to realize that it is carnivores who are more likely ...**See more**

Reply ·  6  · [Share](#)



FRESHCOCONUT



3 July, 2019

Well some vegan and plant based athletes clearly improved in being so. You can even go back to Carl Lewis, his best times and best World record he did set when he was already 30 years old and changed to plant based.

Reply ·  3  · [Share](#)

[Show More Comments](#)

Powered by  OpenWeb

[Terms](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#)



Ad

TODA HISTÓRIA
TEM UM COMEÇO

ECONOMIZE
5 MESES
COM O PLANO ANUAL*

HBO MAX
TEM PRA TODO MUNDO

ASSINE AGORA

SHAZAM!

DISPONÍVEL AGORA

Shazam!




HBO MAX

[Assine Agora](#)

AdChoices

Sponsored



45 anos

More from Diet & Nutrition

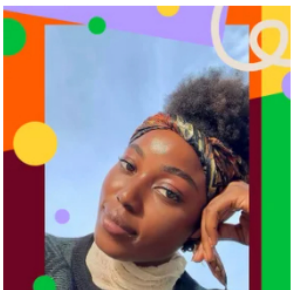


BODY

No One Needs Kourtney K's Vagina Detox Gummies

CHANTÉ JOSEPH

APR 7, 2023



UNBOTHERED

I'm Afro-Vegan & Christmas With Family Is Complicated



by EDISANA STEPHEN



WELLNESS

9 Eco-Friendly Reusable Water Bottles For Low-Impact Hydration

by KARINA HOSHIKAWA

ADVERTISEMENT



DEDICATED FEATURE



The One Wellness Habit I've ACTUALLY Maintained In Quarantine

by ELIZA DUMAIS

DEDICATED FEATURE



Herbal Tea Drinkers: Here's Your Pocket Guide To Traditiona...



by RUBY ANDERSON



GIFT GUIDES

13 Gifts Any Health Nut You Know Will Go, Well, Nuts Over

by KARINA HOSHIKAWA

ADVERTISEMENT



DEDICATED FEATURE

This Is Why “Wellness Teas” Have Grown So Popular In ...

by REBECCA DECZYNSKI



HEALTHY SNACKS

The Healthy Snacks To Have In Your Pantry For Late-Night Munchies

by CORY STIEG

DIET & NUTRITION



The Best Milk Alternatives For A Non-Dairy Swap

by KARINA HOSHIKAWA

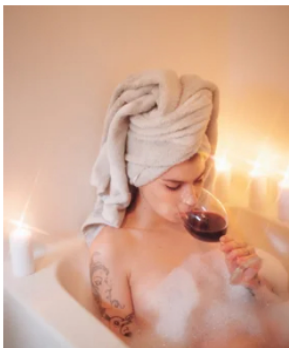
ADVERTISEMENT



WELLNESS

What To Know About “Immune Boosters” Before Trying Them

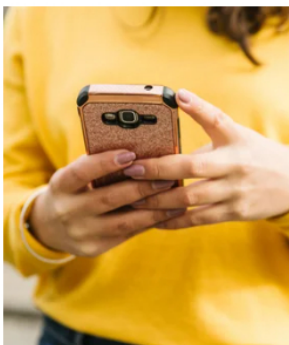
by KARINA HOSHIKAWA



GUIDE TO WINE

A Doctor’s Tips On Choosing Healthier Wines

by KARINA HOSHIKAWA



DIET & NUTRITION

Should You Get An Online Nutritionist?

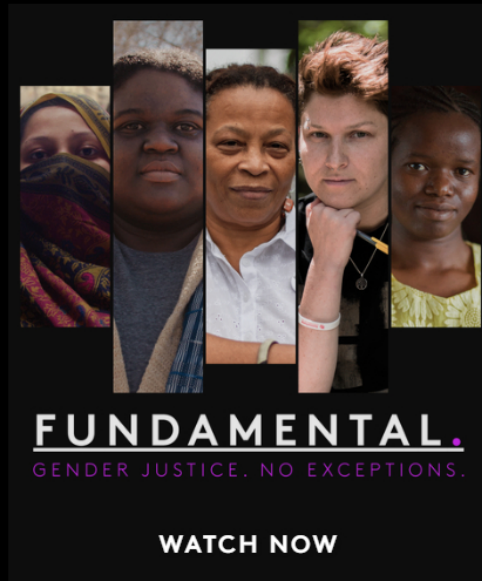
by ELIZABETH GULINO

R29 Original Series



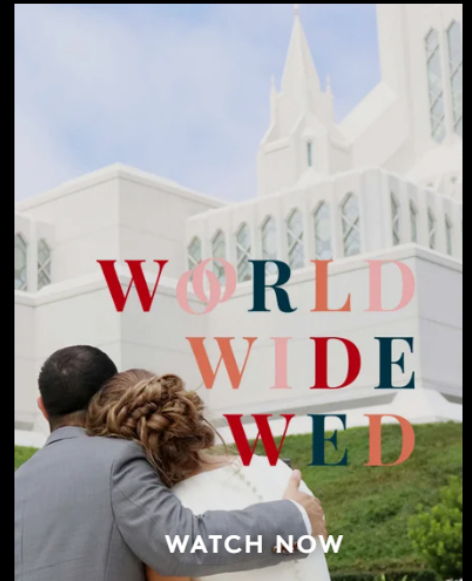
COMEDY

8 comedians, in conversation.



NEWS

Fundamental. Gender Justice.
No Exceptions.



DOCUMENTARY

Five love stories behind diverse,
multicultural marriages.

