

Abstract

Amateur Male endurance Athlete's Perceptions of a Low Carbohydrate, High Fat Diet [†]

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Low carbohydrate, high fat (LCHF) diets have become increasingly popular in recent years amongst endurance athletes. Current research with elite male athletes following an LCHF diet shows mixed results on performance outcomes. Despite lack of clear evidence of benefits, a large proportion of both amateur and professional athletes chooses to follow a LCHF diet. There is currently little understanding on their perceptions and experiences with the diet. We explored amateur male endurance athletes' perceptions of benefits attributed to following a LCHF diet. Twelve amateur endurance athletes were interviewed in person or via skype. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for recurrent themes to identify concepts and categories using an inductive reasoning approach.

Preliminary findings suggest that athletes choose to follow LCHF diets for a variety of reasons, including general health, body composition goals, and brain health. Participants were finding the first 4 to 6 weeks of the diet difficult, but perceived multiple benefits of the diet. They liked the flexibility the diet gives them with a variety of options for food choice. They felt that they can go without refueling for longer, making endurance training and events simpler. They often read on the topic and check the credibility of their sources trusting academics and nutritionists in preference to others. Surprisingly, participants valued convenience, simplicity, and perceived energy levels above specific performance outcomes. This indicates that further research on LCHF diets in athletes should broaden to include non-performance-based outcomes.



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