Ketogenic Diets and Athletic Performance Transcript

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Introduction to ketogenic diets and sports performance

How do ketogenic diets impact exercise performance and body composition? The International Society of Sports Nutrition recently published a position paper on the topic, so let's take a look.

How the review selected ketogenic diet studies

They reviewed the existing literature and only included controlled trials where participants ate less than 50 grams of carbohydrates or had their ketone levels measured to make sure they were actually on a ketogenetic diet.

Ketogenic diet were found to be neutral to detrimental for athletic performance compared to higher carb diets without any clear consistent positive effects.

Overall effects on athletic performance

Regarding endurance performance specifically, every study on elite athletes suggested a negative effect. And that was similar to the research on recreational athletes, although one study did note positive effects.

Endurance performance findings

Nonetheless, the authors note that more long-term research is needed. Regarding strength, ketogenic diets tended to produce similar results to higher carb diets in most studies, though there were a few studies that noted worse performance.

And lastly, they found that ketogenic diets may lead to greater losses in both fat and fat-free mass compared to non-ketogenic diet.

Strength performance findings

And that could largely be explained by them just consuming less calories and by depleting their glycogen stores, which is a storage form of carbohydrates.

Body composition and overall takeaway

So overall, there doesn't seem to be anything special about a ketogenetic diet for athletic performance, and based on the current evidence base, it may even be detrimental in some ways, although more long-term research is welcomed as mentioned earlier.