

Iowa Strength and Conditioning



Nutritional Information: Athletes and Iron Deficiency

Iron deficiency is a common problem for female athletes. Studies have routinely found that athletes, especially female athletes, are often iron-deficient or anemic. One of iron's major functions is to carry oxygen to and carbon dioxide away from all the cells in your body. The brain also relies on iron and without enough you will find it hard to concentrate, feel tired and irritable. Iron is also needed to maintain a healthy immune system, without adequate iron levels you may be prone to more frequent infections.

A combination of the following factors place athletes at risk of iron deficiency:

1. Inadequate supply of dietary iron. Athletes who avoid red meat have difficulty meeting the body's iron needs.
2. Increased demands for iron. Hard training stimulates an increase in red blood cell and blood vessel production, and increases the demand for iron. (Iron turnover is highest for endurance athletes training at high intensity).
3. High iron loss. Blood loss through injury, or menstruation. In endurance athletes, 'foot strike' damage to red blood cells in the feet due to running on hard surfaces with poor quality shoes leads to iron loss. Finally, because iron is lost in sweat, heavy sweating leads to increased risk of deficiency.

"THE IOWA WAY"

All experience is an arch to build on.

-- Henry Brooks Adams

We can learn something from any experience, even one that is painful. In fact, we often learn more from painful experiences than from pleasant ones. When we say or do something foolish or hurtful that causes us embarrassment or guilt, pain gives us a reason to learn and behave differently next time. It may hurt to miss a critical shot, in some way let the team down or simply to lose, but the pain of that experience may be the beginning of renewed motivation and focus.

We can't change the experiences we have, but we can learn from them. Our life is a gift that comes wrapped in what we experience each moment. When we accept this gift and open it willingly, no matter what the wrapping looks like, we put ourselves in a position to discover unexpected treasures. We live life to the fullest, and we learn who we are as we grow. In that way, all experience is positive in building our lives.

