



# Clinical Sports Nutrition

As a health consultant specializing in human performance and clinical sports nutrition, I have engaged with a wide variety of clients who express enormous variation in body chemistry, origin of descent, body composition and knowledge in health, fitness and nutrition. On a one-to-one basis, my initial goal is to objectively determine for each individual their functional health status, athletic condition and predetermined genetic disposition. This is achieved through a personal interview, a mandatory fitness assessment and an eclectic variety of functional health assessments and screening procedures.

This is the basis of clinical sports nutrition and client/advisor/consultant/professional interaction. I refer to individuals I engage with on a professional basis as “clients” rather than “patients” because patient is a term commonly reserved for those who require medical intervention, and patient is medically defined as “one who is suffering from any disease or behavioral disorder and is under treatment for it” (Stedman’s Medical Dictionary, 26th Edition, 1995, pp 1313-14).

Clearly then, any competitive, recreational or fitness athlete looking for professional support, guidance and direction to enhance wellness, strengthen immune response, improve recovery or develop muscle for the purpose of improving performance, as opposed to treatment for a disease or some form of chronic illness, does not fit or enter into this medical definition.

Medically speaking, “clinical” pertains to a clinic or to the bedside. It is founded on actual observation and treatment of patients, as distinguished from theoretical or basic science. However, medicine is primarily concerned with curing disease as opposed to enhancing the athletic performance of a healthy individual. Even sports medicine falls short in this regard, as very few sports medicine physicians have a strong background in the science of nutrition, especially the kind of nutrition that pertains to consuming whole food and the precise use of natural health products.

What percentage of the public who attend a sports medical clinic by referral show up without an injury? When a patient does visit a sports medical clinic, do they enjoy the benefits of a complete detailed analysis of their diet, training program and lifestyle? Not likely.

## The Definition of Medicine

In my medical dictionary the first definition of medicine listed is “a drug”, meaning that sports nutrition and sports medicine are two entirely different things. The specialty of Clinical Sports Nutrition may be performed in a clinical environment, such as an office with or without a secretary or host, but the objective is to improve function, form and athletic performance with exercise, nutrition and natural health products, not drugs.

The great thing about clinical sports nutrition and working with athletes is that outside of sports injury and the odd medical condition, the majority of clients are relatively well, lean and fit, or they want to be and they have an interest in fitness and natural health care. This isn’t always true but it is true in the majority of cases. If, on the other hand I engage with a client looking for treatment of disease, as opposed to information about creating health and wellness, I’ll send that client to a physician who is legally qualified to treat disease. Remember, we don’t want to step on any medical toes or practice medicine without a license. God forbid.

Athletic clients engaged in sport and regular training tend to be motivated and high-spirited, as opposed to being lethargic, depressed or morbid. Based on my experience, they also tend to be young at heart, optimistic and willing to try almost anything to achieve their objective. Instead of sucking the life out of you, which certain people can and will do if given the opportunity, athletic clients tend to be anxious to learn, and more importantly, willing to apply what they’ve learned. I am generalizing here and understand the rule of exception.

## The Absence of Physical Conditioning

Instead of focusing on diseases caused by a sedentary lifestyle, athletic clients are looking for better or new ways to improve their performance, develop their athletic skill, enhance muscular strength, power and size or lose bodyfat. This means much less time is spent on health problems caused by a direct lack of fitness, and if you haven’t consulted with hundreds and even thousands of people yet as a

retailer, fitness professional or health care provider, you'll soon realize that a huge amount of mental apathy, physical weakness, disease, chronic infection and degeneration in the adult population is caused either directly or indirectly by the absence of physical conditioning through controlled exercise. And it gets worse when mismanagement of food, recreational drugs and other variables associated with the environment and lifestyle are mixed into the pie.

I have spent what seemed like an eternity trying to explain to some people that there is no pill for their condition. Fitness is the anchor and the foundation. Whole food, once digested and absorbed into the system, circulates a thousand times more efficiently in an active, muscular body exposed to routine physical movement. Oxygen and nutrient supply, as well as the removal of waste, depends on the power and strength of the heart and cardiovascular system. Natural health products merely add fuel to the fire of health and performance, but without any force and power coming from the engine core, the entire vehicle loses momentum and eventually comes to a standstill. So if a person is unwilling to accept the science of health as an element of personal responsibility, which absolutely includes controlled exercise, physical activity and whole food nutrition, then there is very little that one can do if absence of disease and presence of function is the ultimate goal.

*“Exercise is not an option. It is something you learn to embrace and accept without any mental or emotional opposition. You simply do what needs to be done because you understand the outcome and prefer to live in a state of strength, health and wellness.”*

Dr. Cory Holly

## Health is More than the Absence of Disease

Remember, most people think that health is measured only by the absence of disease and rely primarily on how they feel which as I have explained elsewhere is too subjective and lacks objective reason and balance. Absence of disease is only half of the equation. Not knowing this and moving through life without understanding the role of structure and function and knowing how it is lost, often explains why the mainstream cookie tends to crumble prematurely (diminishment of healthspan). Very few people ever visit the doctor unless they are sick and when they do, seldom (if ever) are they exposed to a complete fitness assessment designed to measure tolerance to stress and determine biological function and capacity, as in strength, endurance, flexibility and aerobic capacity.

This is also generally true regarding Naturopaths, Osteopaths, Chiropractors, Herbalists and most of the various natural health practitioners that collectively comprise the alternative/complementary/functional compendium of health care providers. Emphasis is almost always on treatment of disease albeit that in the context of natural health care, the treatment is typically less potentially harmful and often includes more time, education and discussion pertaining to cause/effect and to lifestyle.

But when is the last time you had a natural health care professional recommend a full and complete fitness assessment at a human performance lab and then go through the results with you in detail? Why have functional fitness and athletic training literally been abandoned