

## **Female Nutrition (Part 1)**

*Dr. Beth Westie*

I'm Beth Westie. Hi, everyone. Background on me, I grew up in Eagan, Minnesota. I actually was raised on a small goat farm. So I grew up milking goats, and I was in 4-H. Anybody else 4-H? Yes! OK.

Some people look at me like, what? Like, yeah. You'd show them in the fair. People are like, what is that? Like you lead it around a ring? And they're like, no, that's so weird. That's what goat people do.

But I was a three-sport athlete in high school. I got a scholarship to play volleyball at Northern Michigan University. Played there for four years. And then I went to graduate school here, also got certified in acupuncture. I also had my first two kids while I was a student. Not a good idea, just saying.

Graduated, started a practice-- or bought a practice. Had my third. And I was actually in active practice for about seven years. And I had a great office. I had a good-sized office. I saw anywhere from 150 to 180 a week.


Loved it. Did a lot of active rehab. Loved working with athletes in my practice.

But really felt the pull to do something different with my career, and that was working with women's health, talking about nutrition. Being an athlete myself, I really-- I mean, I've been on so many different teams with so many different coaches, and everybody's got their own idea of what nutrition is. I mean, I've been put on diets where I wasn't allowed to eat butter or cheese or fat. And I've had practices where you'd have to step on the scale before they'd let you step on the court.

I had coaches take my BMI and then tell me I was-- you know, ooh, you're 20% body fat? That's too heavy to be a starter. Our starters are below 20%, so you're going to need to drop if you want to start this weekend. Like, great things to tell teenage girls, you know? Fantastic.

So coming from being an athlete in that world and just the different messages that gals get, that kind of led me down the path of what I'm doing now of really trying to tap in and share the information with women, especially with athletes now, about how to fuel their body for better nutrition. Because there's a lot of misinformation out there. There's a lot of stuff out there that we try and do over and over again, yet we're not getting a great result for ourselves.

How many of you are athletes? Yes. OK. So yeah, I went from playing volleyball in college-- and I played a little bit after and dabbled around with some different things.



And then, yes, I play football now. I'm new to it. I'm learning a lot. It's very different. Not a natural football player, I would say.

But it's really fun, and the gals are great. The team is really great. There's a lot of fantastic support around it for the female athletes. I'm really enjoying the experience. Yes.

All right, so did I miss anything? Leading into nutrition, I don't think so. Yeah. So when I talk about nutrition, a lot of it is going to be experiences that I've had with women. And right now, in terms of what I do, I have a couple of books out. And I'm just starting my third book on nutrition for female athletes.

And I speak. And I share this information with a lot of other people, as many people as possible. And I actually do a lot on social media. So I do a lot of Facebook lives and videos. I put articles out there. I really try and share this message as far as I can just so people can get it so they can start making these changes themselves.

So some of this stuff I'm going to go through, you might feel like, oh, this sort of makes sense, or oh my god, why haven't we done this before? I'm like, I know! Why haven't we done this before?


OK. So in the work that I do right now for a lot of women-- again, the multitude book, I apologize. It was actually called *The Female Fat Solution*. It's on Amazon. But I do a lot of talks on that content.

And really what it is is that women are really fed up with a lot of the nutrition information that's out there, because it's all geared towards men. I'm not saying it's bad information. It just doesn't take into account how the female body works and is different week to week, month to month. And a lot of different things impact the female body versus men.

This is the same if you look at the pharmaceutical industry and how they do studies and research. They do studies on men. They will do a study for a medication or something that's meant for females. They'll do it on 140 young men and call it equivalent to a female.

Yeah. Yeah. Your face was like, you know, what? It wasn't even until 1993 that women were even allowed to be a part of studies, of clinical trials. So a lot of the information that's there that's been around forever-- this is how we should eat, or this is how protein works in the body, blah, blah, blah, blah-- all that information is really gathered on the male body. So there really is a lack of information for women.

Now, when I was a student here, I actually went and got certified in acupuncture. And it was fantastic. I loved it. And then I actually started to dive further down that rabbit hole of women's health and fertility issues, menopause, cycle issues, all these things for women and actually had that all through eastern medicine and acupuncture. So I actually had a very small portion of my practice that I did with women. That's where a lot of this stuff stems from.



I'm going to talk about eastern medicine. I'm going to talk about [INAUDIBLE] stuff. So if you're not familiar with that, that's where I would spend hours at night diving into books and diving into research. I found it fascinating.

Basically, women are really fed up with the way that nutrition is presented. How many of you can relate to the thing where, like, you go on a diet or something with your significant other, like husband and wife, and, like, she is following it to a tee. She doesn't cheat at all. She's, like, every day doing this diet. And he's like, eh, all right, I'm following it for the most part. Still have some beer and pizza here and there, whatever. He can sneeze and drop 20 pounds, and she struggles to get 2 pounds off, right?

That is because everything is set up for the male body. Which is fine. And male body responds and reacts differently to when you're changing nutrition. And women just aren't informed about this.

Men lose weight differently than women do. Women gain and build muscle way differently than men do. And it's really important that we're nutritionally supporting that so that if women want to build muscle, get a leaner body, get stronger, get healthier, get more energy that we're providing the right nutrition to have that happen.


Oftentimes, it's just you're following recommendations-- I can't tell you how many times-- I speak to a lot of female athletes, especially high-schoolers, middle school to high-school age teens. And all these gals, they're like, well, in this magazine, it showed this lunch. And I'm like, yeah, because that's this famous actress who is trying to slim down and drop 20 pounds in not a really healthy way for a specific movie role. They're showing this little salad with a tiny piece of salmon next to it for lunch, and that's her food. And you're thinking that that's normal to eat all the time.

Not that that's bad. It's just they're not taking into scope your entire activity level and what you're expecting of your body and how your body needs to repair and recover to really push again the next day as an athlete.

So women are not taking all these things into account when you're looking at how to fuel your body. Again, current recommendations are for men. And, again, women have just struggled for years.

I talk to women literally every day sometimes in tears. They're in tears about how long they've struggled or how many things they've tried. And they'd just be like, I failed on this, or I screwed up on this. And I'm like, it's not you. You're just following the wrong map for what you want to have happen and what you want to get done.

The main thing that I find with women is that they are nutritionally depleting their body. They're trying to cut things out, cut calories, cut nutrition. And that's actually leading them further into



nutritional deficit than actually advancing them forward and allowing their body to get stronger and to really get to their goals.

The nutritional recommendations for female athletes are also the same as they are for men. Which, you know-- right? Not a big surprise.

So when we talk about the female body, when I do talks in fitness centers, gyms, nutrition seminars, all these other things, I actually start with explaining about the female body and hormones and how that works, because a lot of people just don't know.

So for the first part of the cycle, I talk about estrogen being more dominant. Estrogen's going to increase your metabolism. You're going to, overall, get more energy from it. You're just going to feel an extra boost. You're going to have more flexibility in your ligaments.

Fun side note, they've done ACL studies on female athletes. And a lot of them will actually have an increase of ACL tears when they're in week two of their cycle because of that increased flexibility. Yeah.

It also is going to decrease your recovery time. So you're going to recover a lot faster from workouts. You may push yourself really hard on the ninth day, and the next day, you're like, yeah, I'm a little sore, but oh, all right, I feel amazing. This isn't that bad. Here you go.

Estrogen also burns carbs naturally. That's really fun. I love carbs. Carbs are my favorite.


Progesterone, after ovulation, progesterone rises. And then it's sort of like this whole flip. A switch just flips in the body, and things change a lot for women. And this is a big component to really understand to just support your body differently when you're eating and when you're training to get the most out of your body.

You're going to have naturally lower energy. Progesterone kind of sucks the life out of you a little bit. It's going to slow down your digestive system. Really everything slows down quite a bit. A lot of women will talk about experiencing bloating or constipation or other things like that.

But really, a big piece of that is that your digestive system is slowing down. I mean, progesterone literally means progestation. So your body's getting ready to sustain a viable pregnancy every month whether or not it's there. But it's trying to just absorb every piece of nutrient from every bite that you're eating all the time. And so it just--

[SCREECHES]

Screeching halt. So there's little things that I talk about for women to help speed it up naturally. Fiber, probiotics, digestive enzymes, just keeping them moving



Progesterone also can disrupt your sleep. Some women, they'll notice that they go through a cyclical insomnia pattern. Or it's just tougher to get sleep, or they're not resting as well. That's very common with progesterone.

For some gals, they just don't understand why. But once you start paying attention to what's going on in your body and the timing of it, it all kind of fits together.

So there's other things you can do then in terms of getting the right sleep, getting the right rest to really have your body repair better so that you can train harder and push yourself the next day versus feeling like you're lagging and falling behind.

It's going to increase your recovery time. So again, that leg day that you had last week, where you feel like you just kicked butt, this one you're going to feel--

--for days. You're going to feel like, oh my god, I'm so sore. Why is this-- oh, I can't. Oh, this is terrible. OK, I feel like that sometimes.


But that's one of the things that gals will feel like, oh my god, did I really overdo it? I didn't even push myself that hard. It's tougher to work out in the gym. I was doing heavier weights last week. Why is this tougher for me right now? And a lot of it can just be where your body's at.

So it's really taking into account what's happening naturally in the body. How does that fit into your training schedule? How does that fit in with your overall life that you can be like, I'm going to tweak this and that. Or if I do experience a tough time with this, I know it's probably because of where I'm at on my hormones, and it's not just me that I'm screwing up on something.

Progesterone, also because your basal body temperature is a lot higher at this point-- basal body temperature, yes. I actually go over that with people too, because women are like, what? But it's going to burn fat more naturally.

And for females, the female body-- again, one of the big differences between the male and female body is that the female body is actually designed to be fat-storing. So when you have an increased basal body temperature, it allows you to potentially tap into more fat-burning days naturally.

So this is a lot of the information that I talk about with women on how to eat for your hormones and your cycle. When we talk about estrogen and the lower basal body temperature, we talk about cooling foods to work with estrogen more. This is going to help your body increase that energy, burn more carbs, et cetera.



So these are infographics that I promote and talk about and have out there for people. Cooling foods, chicken, turkey, fish, raw fruits and vegetables. Your body's going to be able to break down that fibrous component of raw fruits and vegetables easier, because your digestive system's working a lot better. Iced water. And then cooling spices. A lot of people are like, oh I don't like turkey. Then don't eat turkey. Just use different spices for your food then.

Warming foods, beef, bacon. Usually people cheer when they see bacon. Cooking your fruits and vegetables more and then breaking down the fibrous components so your body can break it down easier. When that digestive system is just naturally slower at this point, you want to help it out every way that you can.

Hot water, tea, coffee, spicy food, sipping ginger, also very, very warming spices also good for your digestive system. So just, again, incorporating different things.


The thing I really love about eating for your hormones and cycle as well is that it's not restrictive. So a lot of gals can start to incorporate these things using whole foods, using spices and natural things or just sort of piece in it. And it's not, oh dang it, I'm in my cooling phase, and I now had margaritas and go out to a Mexican restaurant, and we had spicy food. So what? It's more about the impression overall of the day, of the week. You know, it's flexible, which is fantastic for women, because we're busy and have busy lives, right? All the other people in my household that I cook for and prepare meals for.

So it's nice that you can really take an overall impression and not have to worry about every single bite you're putting in your body. It's more about everything in general, the tone of the day for eating and how well that's going to work with your hormones. Going through the different phases, the [INAUDIBLE].

I've found that women are able to really decrease a lot of their symptoms around their cycle, regulate their cycle more naturally. The hormones are impressionable, right? Any gal that's lived with other gals in college or been on a sports team where you're like, yep, our hormones will all line up perfectly together. Use the same thing with your nutrition and just have everything kind of match up and become more regular, which is just easier on your body.

I mean, that's the thing too about the overall impression on hormones for women. A lot of people are like, oh, you want to evenly balance your hormones. But the female body is not meant to be balanced and stagnant. It ebbs and flows. So you want to lean into that ebb and flow, and you can do that through your nutrition. Which is fun, right? Yes.

Protein and hormones. Protein is the number one nutrient that I find that women are lacking. But they're just not getting enough protein. When I ask them about their healthy diets or, I'm working out. I'm going to the gym. Or I'm trying to train for this marathon coming up. And I go, hey, well, what are you eating? Well, I'm eating super healthy and super clean. I'm doing Whole 30 or



whatever. I'm like, awesome. You know, cutting out a lot of processed foods, sugars, et cetera. But they're not getting enough protein.

What did you have for lunch? Salad. I had salad for lunch. It was really good. It had a lot of veggies on it. Super.

What fuel did you put on there? Because lettuce is not going to help you run very far. So protein I talk about being like a gas in your gas tank for your car. You can't drive to Duluth on a quarter tank of gas. It's just not going to get you there. Same thing with protein. You have to put the right nutrient fuel in your body to have the right things happen.

Overall, in terms of how it relates to hormones, there's 20 amino acids that the body needs. 11-- half-- we only produce 11. So the other nine have to come from foods that you eat. This is a basic thing that a lot of people don't understand.

But the other really fun thing about the female body is that when it's under stress, it doesn't even produce naturally all nine amino acids. Yay! Which means you really need to focus on getting the right amino acids and having it be well-rounded so that you're having the right results and then being able to build and sustain that muscle.

It takes a minimum of 20 grams of protein to start protein muscle synthesis. That's the threshold. So a lot of people are like, oh, yeah, I totally ate protein. Yeah. I had this protein bar. And I'm like, oh, how much protein was in it? It had 8 grams of protein. I'm like, like a Snickers. That's not bad. It's just not at a point where it's really going to help fuel the body and give you that nutrition.

And then of course, use a variety of proteins, because all these different foods have different types of protein and amino acids in them. So you want a variety to really get the spectrum in there. The proper amounts of protein can help balance hormones, insulin, estrogen.

Of course, the grain-fed-- I'm sure you guys have done some research and seen things on grain-fed meats and how that affects hormones and increasing estrogen and sort of tipping the balance. The body doesn't really metabolize that excess hormone as well, so it causes a buildup, meaning that excess hormone can get stuck in fat cells, specifically visceral fat, which is really tough for the body to release. So that's where a lot of gals will have things like PCOS or a lot of other hormone issues. Because there's a lot of excess hormone in the body.