

FLEX

BY VMX > VOLUME 2

THE HOME
OF STRONG
WOMEN

ESTHER CHENANG'AT

MANAGING ROTATOR
CUFF INJURIES

4 NUTRITION MYTHS
DEBUNKED



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FOUR NUTRITION MYTHS DEBUNKED

WORDS ASHLEY KIBUTHA

Ashley is the first American Registered Dietitian in Kenya, with a decade of experience and a demonstrated history of working in the supermarket industry with retail partners. She is a healthcare services professional skilled in weight loss coaching, chronic disease prevention and management, allergies and general nutrition, nutrition programming, recipe creation and execution, corporate wellness, staff management and strategic planning. She is passionate about empowering people with science-based nutrition information so they are able to make the most informed decisions when it comes to nutrition and their health.

1 Carbohydrates (Carbs) are bad and will make me gain weight and/or prevent me from losing weight

Carbs are an ESSENTIAL macronutrient, and our brains need at least 130g of carbs per day to function optimally. They are our body's preferred source of fuel, and are most efficiently converted to energy, as opposed to fat or protein. Carbs are just as important to have after a workout as protein to replenish your glycogen stores, and are also needed BEFORE you workout, to ensure you have enough energy to perform optimally. The biggest takeaway message about complex carbs is to have them regularly throughout the day, with every meal and snack, and to focus on

proper portion control, paired with a protein. All of this will help to reduce blood sugar spikes and stabilise your blood sugar and energy levels throughout the day. See www.myplate.gov for a properly balanced meal.

2 I need LOADS of protein

Your body can only absorb so much protein at a time. The most protein your body can absorb per meal is about 25-30g, depending on the individual. The rest is considered as waste and is excreted out of your body via urine. It doesn't matter what other supplements you are on, this is the most your body can absorb per meal. Protein is also an ESSENTIAL macronutrient and needs to be consumed post-workout with a carb, especially after resistance training due to the damage done to your muscles during the training session. It's important to remember, though, that just because something is "good" for you doesn't mean more is always better. The general daily protein recommendation is 0.8-1g of protein per kg (total body weight) per day. Again, this is the general recommendation, and workout frequency, type and duration should always be considered on an individual basis, as well as any other health factors. Regardless, no matter what your daily protein needs, the human body cannot absorb more than 25-30g per meal.

3 Fruit has too much sugar

Fruit does have sugar, but it is a naturally occurring sugar. Besides sugar, fruit also provides so many other vitamins and minerals, including fiber. This makes fruit a complex carbohydrate, aka a "good" carb. So PLEASE eat fruit, and don't allow the misinformation to change your mind, as they are a very good source of nutrition in your diet. It is important to note that this is true for all fruits, and as with all food, variety is the key. All the different colours and types of fruit and vegetables that you see give us different nutrients, which are all essential for overall good health.

4 Coconut oil is the best oil

Let's set the record straight on this one for good. Coconut oil is a saturated fat. In one tablespoon, there is 13g of saturated fat. Saturated fat is not a "good" fat. This is the type of fat that can increase our cholesterol levels as well as inflammation in our bodies. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, Mayo Clinic and the American Heart Association, we should have no more than 12-15g of saturated fat per day. Once again, always try to balance your diet by having everything in moderation and controlled portions. It's okay to enjoy coconut oil in small amounts occasionally, but don't add it to your diet thinking it is a healthy fat.

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GAME CHANGER

Kenya's strongest woman, Esther Chenang'at, talks to us about her journey as a powerlifter, the competitive powerlifting scene in Kenya, and her preparation for competitions.

FLEX: How long have you been working out?

Chena: I've been lifting heavy for three years, but before that I used to swim competitively since high school. There was a small patch of home workouts in between that.

What inspired you to start powerlifting?

After high school and university, there were no groups to competitively swim with. I'm also self-employed, with no work team, so I decided to look for something new. I went to the gym and started lifting, and that's where I learnt that there were differences between powerlifting, bodybuilding and Strong Man.

Is there anyone that you looked up to when you were coming up as powerlifter?

Yes, Lya Bavoil, from France. She's a 69kg powerlifter, but she's so strong. I think her heaviest squat is 215kg. She fluctuates between 63kg and 69kg, so she is incredibly strong. I saw her and thought, if that's what I can be, let me be that.

Tell us about your training and how you prepare for a competition.

I like the Russian style of training, which is pretty intense. You just focus on the three main lifts with heavy volume. Heavy volume means lots of sets and minimal reps. So, for example, for a squat workout I could do 7-10 sets of three reps each. Accessory work is very minimal. I'll do squat with bench, or deadlift with bench. I'm trying to incorporate shoulders more, because my shoulder press is so bad. But you need it for

the Strong Man competitions.

Just for the record, do you mind telling us your current personal best 1 rep. maximum (1RM) in the squat, bench and deadlift?

I tested my 1RMs back in May. They were 165kg for back squat, 190kg for deadlifts and 80kg for bench press.

Are you the strongest woman in Kenya?

So far yes, based off of the Strong Woman competitions. In the first one I took part in, there were 11 competitors, and then only seven in the second competition, and 11 again in the third. They are really good competitors; they keep me awake at night! But it's fun, and they push me to be better.

What is your diet like and what supplements do you take?

I take whey protein, creatine and pre-workouts. I don't take any vitamins – they are a waste of money. I just try to have a normal diet. But I do need to eat more.

Are there many female powerlifters in Kenya?

No, the first competition was held back in May, and that has made it more popular. What is more established is the Strong Man/Woman competition. That's a different format. Powerlifting only involves the three main compound lifts. But for Strong Man, you do tyre flips, farmer's walk, running... I'm not good at some of those things, but I hope there will be more powerlifting competitions here in the future. Otherwise, I'll look outside Kenya.

I tested my 1RMs back in May. They were 165kg for back squat, 190kg for deadlifts and 80kg for bench press.





When and where is your next competition?

There is a Strong Man competition in August in South Africa, which I might not be able to attend. After that there is another one in November and December in Kenya. So, it does mean I'm prepping for competitions a lot, adjusting my training to peak closer to the competition date, when my anxiety levels are up high!

Do you self-train or do you have a coach?

I have an online coach called Sheiko, who is in Russia. I use his app and it's really intense. But I love it. I post videos of myself lifting, and there's also an online community of lifters where you can critique each other. Everyone is pretty strong, and they compete internationally.

What achievements are you most proud of as a powerlifter?

Cracking the 120kg squat, because I was stuck there for two years. I finally cracked it this year. I was stuck mentally, but also my shoes have helped. I used to lift flat-footed, but the Nordic Lifting shoes made a huge difference. It's worth getting the right equipment, but don't rely on it. Now I can squat really well without those accessories, so using them helped me break that barrier.

Many women shy away from powerlifting and strength training in general because they are under the impression that they'll instantly bulk up. If you could give them any advice, what would you say?

They shouldn't be afraid of that. To get to that bulking size they are afraid of, they would have to be on massive amounts of food, even steroids. If anything, this type of training will help you look like the person you want to look like. It helps you put muscle in the right places, and feel strong and empowered. And anyone can do it; it's not that I have more time, I'm just passionate about it, so I am able to push myself. And you don't have to be a powerlifter, just lift weights and fall in love with the metal.



What advice would you give to young powerlifters - male and female - just getting into the sport?

First, I think they should learn about the sport by immersing themselves in the social media side of it, learn about the rules and get inspired by people. The next thing to do is get a coach, online or in-person. It's a very basic sport but it can be confusing. Plus, you can always reach out to me and I can tell you which coaches are good, as I have researched them a lot.

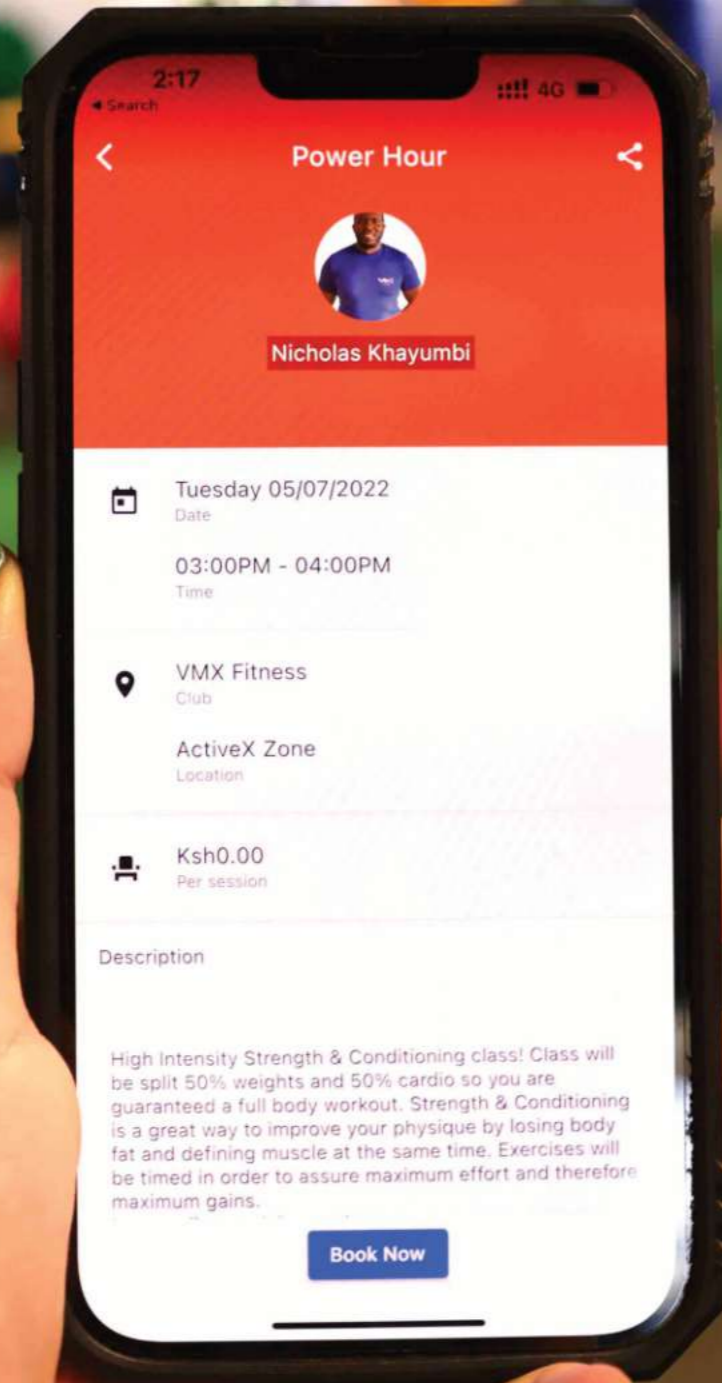
Do you think the future is bright for powerlifting in Kenya? Why?

I think it is. It's only the beginning right now. Strong Man is 5/6 years old, but powerlifting is just getting started. I can only imagine where we will be in the next few years. My numbers are going to be broken by somebody else, but I'm planning to break them myself first.

@lechena

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TRAINER SPOTLIGHT

SCHOLA MUCHIRI

Job role: Trainer and VMX content creator
Qualifications: ACE Personal Trainer, ACE Group Fitness, Diploma in Anatomy and Physiology
Age: 29

FLEX: How long have you been a personal trainer?

Schola: I've been a trainer since 2017. After struggling with my own weight, I decided to do home video workouts, and a friend gave me an 'Insanity Workout' CD which changed my life. I lost weight, qualified as a trainer and changed careers.

How long have you been at VMX?
 Since it opened in August 2021.

How would you describe your training style?

I love high-intensity, cardio, circuit and functional training. Anything to move my body and get a nice endorphin kick.

What classes do you teach at VMX?

I teach Active X, the high-intensity strength class, X-Fit, a fun energetic aerobics class, and Core and Mobility.

When did you fall in love with fitness?

I've always been a sporty girl – I was games captain in high school. I've never been one just to sit around. But I fell in love with the gym after I certified as a trainer, and when I finally understood human anatomy, and how machines and our bodies work.

What has been your biggest obstacle to overcome in the fitness industry?

Not being jacked up. I have a small frame. So, in interviews, people who were big and muscly would always get the job. But your frame or size doesn't determine what you can do.

Do you think women are well represented in the fitness industry?

Not really. At VMX we are, though. I used to be the only female trainer at my previous job. But Kenya could generally do better. We have more female athletes than we do trainers.

What advice would you give someone who wants to start working out/get back into it?

You just have to start. You have to prioritise your well-being. You need to realise the importance of your health. No matter your body size or type, keep moving!

What is the best exercise that everyone should be doing?

Moving. Just move around throughout the day. Take your dog for a walk, play with your kids, hike. Anything, just move your body.

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MANAGING ROTATOR CUFF

INJURIES

WORDS ANIKSHA TRIVEDI

Aniksha is the founder of Kenya's specialty physiotherapy practices, Proactive Physiotherapy & Wellness, with a clinic at VMX Fitness. Her specialities are sports rehabilitation, elite sport athlete management, neurological rehabilitation, and challenging conditions such as persistent lower back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, etc. For this edition of FLEX, she reviews current management options for rotator cuff injuries.

The rotator cuff is a group of muscles and tendons that surround the shoulder joint, keeping the head of the upper arm bone firmly within the shallow socket of the shoulder. Rotator cuff injuries are a common cause of pain and dysfunction for the normal and athletic population and can result in time away from day-to-day function/activity. This review highlights the current management of these injuries with guidance on home management, physiotherapy care and return to function.

Rotator cuff injuries can range from contusions and tendinopathy to full-thickness tears. A comprehensive evaluation is needed to determine the extent of injury and appropriate plan of care. Management strategies can range from rehabilitation to operative intervention, and are guided by the size of the tear, sport, performance limitations, and presence of other pathology.

Conservative management of rotator cuff injuries continues to be the "gold standard" in the active individual and lifting athlete. This includes a comprehensive rehabilitation programme and anti-inflammatories. Newer physiotherapy techniques such, as intramuscular dry needling, shockwave therapy and the use of biologics such as platelet-rich plasma and stem cells, demonstrate early promising results. However, these modalities require in-depth assessment by a qualified physiotherapist or orthopaedic surgeon alongside further radiological investigations to determine their effectiveness.

A recent review by Edwards et al. provided an evidence-based four-phase exercise protocol for the conservative management of rotator cuff injury. These phases included range of motion, flexibility, strengthening, and advanced strengthening/proprioception. Similar to the two aforementioned approaches, our belief is that the complete rehabilitation programme should focus on eliminating initial pain and inflammation, improving shoulder mobility, and addressing stability, strength, power, and neuromuscular control, while correcting any identifiable issues along the kinematic chain. This can be guided by your physiotherapist.

Early rehabilitation following rotator cuff injury should focus on the reduction of pain, inflammation, swelling, and restoring normal range of motion. This can be accomplished using both local physical modalities such as ice, electrical stimulation, and shockwave therapy in addition to manual therapies. The individual should also avoid activities that cause reproduction of symptoms. This may include activities related to weight training sport-specific activities such as throwing or overhead lifting such as a bag or heavy pan into cupboard.


Shockwave therapy treatment

Shockwave therapy involves the application of high or low-energy shockwaves to the affected area. The shockwaves promote regeneration and repair of the muscles, tendons and bones.

Shockwave therapy reduces pain and recovery time for sufferers of such injuries, with some studies suggesting that shockwave treatment could replace day surgery treatment for some patients. The use of shockwave therapy on rotator cuff injuries is shown to be highly effective for a number of reasons, including: reducing pain, improving ability to complete daily activities, improving range of motion, and improving power.

The treatment is also non-invasive, making it an excellent alternative to surgery. Patients are able to play sport, exercise and return to work directly after the treatment.

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