

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

*The content of this podcast has not been evaluated by Health Canada or the FDA. It is educational in nature and should not be taken as medical advice. Always consult a qualified medical professional to see if a diet, lifestyle change, or supplement is right for you. Any supplements mentioned are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Please note that the opinions of the guests or hosts are their own and may not reflect those of Advanced Orthomolecular Research, Inc.*

*\* \* \* Intro Music \* \* \**

Welcome to Supplementing Health, a podcast presented by Advanced Orthomolecular Research. We are all about applying evidenced-based and effective dietary, lifestyle and natural health product strategies for your optimal health. In each episode, we will feature very engaging clinicians and experts from the world of functional and naturopathic medicine to help achieve our mission to empower people to lead their best lives naturally.

*\* \* \**

This week's episode of Supplementing Health is brought to you by AOR's Gymnema-75, a hypoglycemic Ayurvedic herb that helps to suppress sugar cravings naturally while supporting healthy glucose metabolism. Those looking for a natural support for blood sugar management and candida control will benefit from supplementing with this evidence-based high-does extract. Purchase yours today at a local retailer or at [AOR.ca](http://AOR.ca) or [AOR.us](http://AOR.us).

[1:30] *Cassy Price*: Hi, there, and welcome back to Supplementing Health. I'm your host, Cassy Price. This week, I'm joined by Dr. Aaron Zadek. He is a Naturopathic Doctor and Certified Sport Nutritionist through the International Society of Sports Nutrition. We will be discussing sports medicine, body composition, and weight loss. Welcome, Aaron, and thanks for joining us.

[1:48] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Thanks for having me.

[1:49] *Cassy Price*: Why don't we get started by talking a little bit about how you got into the world of sports and your unique take on body composition?

[1:57] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: All right. I started working in sport doing sideline emergency management, so running on the field anytime someone got hurt and then helping them with rehabilitation. We saw a consistent trend where athletes were getting injured a lot, and we were doing a really good job patching them up enough to get back to play, but it was something that we would constantly see the same injury poke its head up, possibly several times in the season or even throughout that athlete's career.

[2:27] I started to get into more of the preventative side, where we were looking at how we could use nutrition, in particular, to help with some of the prevention and improve recovery from injuries. That's where I took my sports medicine direction, and now I work with lead athletes on

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

the professional level, all the way down to recreational athletes and weekend warriors helping them meet their health goals, both in weight management as well as hitting their fitness peaks in their own different sports and what they're looking to do.

[3:06] *Cassy Price*: You have a special focus in Mix-Martial Arts or MMA Fighters. I know you work one-on-one with a lot of them, and part of their career is to fit into a certain weight class as it is a weight-class sport. That will contain a certain degree of rapid weight loss. Can you talk about some of the things that you do specifically for weight loss and body composition with these MMA fighters?

[3:26] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: In Mix-Martial Arts, Boxing, Kickboxing, each athlete has a contract weight, or they have to weigh in. If they're even .1 of a pound over that contract, they could lose the fight; they could lose a significant portion of their wage. So, it's really important that they're diligent and on target throughout their camp and then on the scale before the competition.

[3:48] My experience with that sport, especially given, as you said, the extreme cutting that you might see is helping them take an evidence-based approach, making sure that they're not dehydrating down or limiting the dehydration as much as possible and focused on maintaining their weight within their performance threshold. So, maintaining the ideal weight for each athlete based off of their style, based off of their output, and how they can easily and safely touchdown on their target weight and be ready to go the next day.

[4:26] *Cassy Price*: From what I've learned, some of the things these fighters do to reach their fighting weight is actually pretty extreme. What are some of the things that you've seen there?

[4:33] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: A lot of people go into it just thinking that you can just tough through, that you can stay in a sauna for hours and sweat it all away, step on the scale, and then just drink enough water that the next day you're back on track. It doesn't work that way. What we do know from the research is there's severe detriment to performance.

[4:56] Hydration is so critical to performance that when we see hydration drop even a little bit, the detriment to performance, especially in combat sports, where your margin of error is very small can be quite extreme. From weight cutting, you tend to see it all. You see guys who try to do a lot of baths with Epsom salts to pull the water out or a sauna. But this is just moving around water. This isn't true weight drop, and it's certainly not going to be long-lasting in any capacity for body composition.

[5:33] For athletes or athletes that are getting into combat sports, it's really important that you limit the cuts. It's not a good thing for you at the amateur level. You should not be cutting any weight. You should be stepping on the scale at your weight and competing there because it gives you a chance to hone your craft and focus on the performance side, which at the amateur level gaining that experience and being able to execute your game plan is critical to seeing you perform the way you've imagined.

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

[6:02] *Cassy Price*: Now, that type of weight loss, or rather, water loss, is pretty extreme and would not be applicable to most people. Can you outline what your approach would be for the average client that comes to you looking to improve their body composition?

[6:16] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: If you're looking to lose weight, we always want to make sure that we're communicating clearly. Are we looking to lose fat, or are we looking to reduce our body composition? Unfortunately, the number on the scale tells a little too much. The number on the scale is that combination of organ weight, bone mass, muscle mass, as well as body fat.

[6:38] When you get obsessed with that number, we're not really qualifying how well our workouts have been going. We can have a great stretch of workouts, and we can see our weight plateau. We're not losing weight, and we're like, "But I'm working out so much." Well, maybe we're gaining a little bit of muscle mass while we're losing fat mass, and that's still in that positive. But if they're looking to see that number come down, we have to look at what's behind that.

[7:01] One of the approaches we take is we do an in-visit body composition – absolutely important. This way, we know not only where their numbers are at as far as fat mass, but also where they're storing their fat. We'll also take a look at the timeline they're looking to get there. That will give us an idea of how we need to cut calories, as well as how we need to look at workouts.

[7:24] Everyone's a little different, and it's a lot easier when you have a professional athlete across from you is doing two to three workouts a day and managing around that because the output is so much more. Recreational – maybe we've got kids at home, and we're trying to squeeze in our extra workouts around our lifestyle, then we have to be really smart about our calories, and that's critical.

[7:49] Recognizing where we're blowing our targets, recognizing how we can use healthy foods that make us feel full very quickly using our fibre, using our protein is critical to that, and really doing away with the myth that a calorie of fat is the same as a calorie of protein is the same as a calorie of carb, which is probably one of the biggest weight specific myths that we see out there.

[8:17] *Cassy Price*: That's a great point. I think there is a greater awareness now that not all calories are equal, but can you break that down a little bit further for us?

[8:26] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Yeah, and it seems like this information changes in the news almost daily, which makes it very difficult as a consumer to interpret. I think my favourite group of studies is looking at some of the over-feeding studies for protein and some of the studies that look at – if we reach our caloric targets, let's say we're looking to lose a pound a week. That's net 500 calories a day that you've got to bring down to lose that.

[8:58] If we need that target, and then eat a little bit more protein, we'd expect to gain weight because we're going past our target. That just doesn't happen. What we realize is calorically,

protein, there is a thermogenic effect of food. We do tend to invest a little bit more energy into burning protein and making it usable for our body, and this means it doesn't quite have the same caloric burden that we see from our fats and our carbohydrates.

[9:28] So, that's really interesting. It gives us an idea of, "Well, if we're hungry, and we need to snack on something, but we're already really tight against our calories for the day, then maybe we should be opting for something that's lean and clean that's more protein. Or we can look more toward fibre and stuff that doesn't have a massive caloric burden to it. Whereas, our fats and our carbs, obviously, can have a higher burden to it, and we all joke about how carbs and cravings seem to go hand-in-hand.

[9:59] *Cassy Price*: Right. So, it's not just about your overall macros. It's about the whole equation of calories in versus calories out, removing the empty calories of simple carbs, and then building your macro profile appropriately to incorporate higher protein and higher fibre. So, aiming for a higher nutrient, lower-calorie diet that keeps you feeling full. If this is the first step in your regime with athletes and patients you work with, what would be your second step?

[10:26] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Making sure the nutrient timing is on point. I find that to be really important, and every athlete's a little different. We see some athletes shifting more towards ketogenesis. That's been an interesting fad recently. But we do see with a lot of individuals who are trying to both workout and maintain a busy work life and trying to find that balance that they might go through large stretches without eating.

[10:54] They think this is a good thing because it's like, "Look. I consume no calories in this big stretch of time." But, in fact, all we've done is built up this little hormone cascade of "I'm hungry. I'm hungry. I'm really hungry. Feed me." And all the sudden maybe our next meal, we're starting to blow our targets. We're going a little too far, too fast.

[11:12] I find more consistent meals through the day for a lot of people to just be a little bit better, especially around our exercise. That window after performance, when we've been in the gym, or we've been on the mats, we really want to make sure that we're fueling ourselves after because this is the time where muscles are looking to recover. They're looking for protein. They're looking for carbohydrates, and that's where, when we give carb, we want to give back. We just burnt our energy stores in this fantastic workout. Let's give that back so we can do it again the next day.

[11:44] The other thing is, there is that trend where we see a lot of people coming in right now who are trying to work out at fasted. The idea of "If I go in fasted, there's no circulating energy; therefore, my workout only burns fat." The reality is, our body needs that energy for performance.

[12:05] Some people find that this is very effective, and good for them, but for those who have to do multiple workouts through the day, or looking for one high-quality workout, we're looking to achieve maybe improved workout goals, maybe it's match repetitions, maybe it's going up in

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

weight. We've got to make sure that we're fueling for this performance. We've got to see success in exercise. Most of the athletes I talk to that workout fasted, they feel sluggish.

[12:35] *Cassy Price*: So overall, you're not a fan of the morning fasted workout?

[12:38] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: No. No, I've never been a fan of a fasted workout. I think the risk for injury goes up too high. I think we make mistakes, and I think when it comes to concentration in sport, that mind-body connection is a huge asset for everybody.

[12:53] *Cassy Price*: What about somebody who is just looking to lose weight and get healthier, but isn't necessarily considering themselves to be an athlete?

[13:01] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: We look at ways to structure nutrient timing, and I always say meal prep is your best friend. When you know you have food available, the food that you've prepared, that you put attention to, that's going to help you stay on target, and you're more likely to stick to the plan. It's like if you go to the grocery store hungry, you're more likely to buy something you shouldn't. You're more likely to overconsume.

[13:22] *Cassy Price*: Okay. One of the things I have personally experienced and hear people talk about is they start working out. The clothes are starting to fit better. They're feeling pretty good about themselves, but the number on the scale just doesn't seem to budge. I assume that has to do with muscle gain in place of the fat loss. However, can you talk about what is actually happening here and how people get into that fat-burning zone?

[13:45] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: There are a couple of things happening, and I think you've hit it. They're in this position where they're turning fat over. They're mobilizing it for energy, and then they're starting to see muscle gain. They're starting to see growth and development, and that's where that sculpting comes from. You can't have one without the other unless you're really burning it to the ground, and then there are risks with that as well.

[14:08] But that's really a good thing when you're seeing that. Things are fitting better. It will come. My first message is, be patient. Second is, we might have to modify some of the workouts to hit your goals. If the goal is to bring your fat mass down and hold muscle mass, and see a lower true weight, then we might have to change the cardio.

[14:31] We might want to keep you in more of a fat-burning state where your low heart rate, that heart rate range of around 120, 130 beats a minute for longer duration. That's a nice easy way to do it. We could also look at higher intensity exercises that have big sprints and explosive nature that has us mobilizing these reserves very quickly. That won't work for everybody – that high-octane explosiveness, but it will work for some.

[15:01] I think the number one message for weight loss or any body composition: make sure you're doing what puts a smile on your face. Our bodies were made to explore motion. We should enjoy it. We should feel good. Our workout should rejuvenate us in a lot of ways. Yes,

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

we'll feel tired, but we should feel a little bit of an endorphin rush. We should feel good. We should feel stress relief. There are a lot of good things that come with it.

[15:30] *Cassy Price*: Cortisol and stress levels can really play a role in weight gain, especially when it comes to that midsection. How often do you look at hormones at stress levels with your athletes and patients, and what role does that play in helping them with their body composition?

[15:45] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Definitely plays a role, as you said. When cortisol is out of alignment, and we see it spiking at the wrong times, we definitely see some changes in the way we store fat. It's such a big problem right now, especially in this 9 to 5 grind that we especially see a lot of people stuck in.

[16:04] I think the big thing is structure. We have to organize. We have to plan, and if we have to intervene to bring cortisol down to make sure it's spiking appropriately, then you intervene. We always look at that. We want to make sure that we have an idea of where their hormones are, especially in our lean athletes, but it is something that's important.

[16:25] I think that for a lot of people when it's weight management, it's always going to be multi-factorial if there's a history of hormones acting out, then yes, we absolutely have to address that. For some, it's just routine management. It's about finding that consistency and finding that drive. Not everyone can wake up at 4:00 in the morning and workout.

[16:46] *Cassy Price*: No, you absolutely have to enjoy it for it to be maintainable. I completely agree. There's such a large role for mindset in the success of somebody's composition goals or body composition goals, weight loss goals. There has been some research that even speaks to the role of limiting beliefs in limiting that weight loss or preventing people from reaching those goals.

[17:10] Another component to that mental gain that you've touched on briefly, but I'd like to dive into a little deeper, are cravings. What are some of the tips and tricks other than protein and fibre, which you previously mentioned, do you use to help your clients manage their blood sugar levels and reduce those cravings?

[17:31] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: One of my favourite techniques to help ensure that we're staying on point and listening to our body is actually using a smaller plate. Everyone's been at home, and they pull out that big dinner plate, and that's fine because you're going to load it up, and then you're going to scarf it down because you're hungry. You've worked out. Or maybe where you've got a family where if you don't get it on your plate, someone else is eating it. I don't know.

[17:52] But one of the things that we do a lot of is portion control. We get them to use a smaller plate, one that's about 30% less, and we say, "Listen, you can refill. That's fine, but you have to wait five minutes. You have to let those stretch receptors in your stomach kick in." And we say, "Listen. You can finish that plate, but you're going to wait five minutes. You can go back for

another serving, but when you go back, you're going to pick a little more from the protein and the fibrous green side than the carbohydrate. You've had your portion of carbohydrate, and we'll see how that goes." For a lot of people, that will work. The other thing is, make sure you're drinking fluids. A lot of times when we're feeling that hunger, it's not always hunger. Sometimes, it's hydration.

[18:39] *Cassy Price*: And that is between meals. I seem to recall in a previous discussion that drinking with meals can actually dilute your digestive juices, which could be counterproductive.

[18:48] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Absolutely. We want to make sure that we're not just parched.

[18:53] *Cassy Price*: What about from a supplemental perspective. What are some of the things that you have found to be effective in helping to reduce patients' cravings?

[19:00] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: I think continually acknowledging why we're doing things. There's the mental side of things. And it depends on what we're craving. If we're craving birthday cake, that might be an exercise in mental control where we have to remind ourselves, "What do we want more? The birthday cake, or achieving a physical weight, achieving this goal, hitting the scale properly. What is our goal?" In other cases, it's no; our body is still hungry. What are we looking for here, and why? Then we have to look through the day and say, "What choices did we make? Did we stick to the plan? Where are we at?"

[19:36] Sometimes, in the extreme side, for a professional fighter who's got to make his target weight, and it's got to come down, you've got to just put your chin down and barrel through it. That is very realistically the case for our professionals who are working three times a day. They can't burn anymore. There's nothing left to burn there, and their calories have to be at a certain point, or they're not going to be in that healthy performance range.

[20:02] But for them, we look to keep them in that performance range from camp to camp. But for recreation, and I really like chromium for that. I love that mushrooms are moderately high source. I don't know if it's the highest one out there, but I know that they have a decent amount. Someone was telling me the other day that Gymnema does some really neat stuff with regard to sugar cravings.

[20:25] Other ones that I'll use in particular: mostly just getting that fibre in. I would rather see an athlete pick good fibre choices and maybe an extra quarter of a lean chicken breast than go and just ravage on a bag of chips. Your calorie value to the protein is not as much – there's density to the food, we're going to feel more full.

[20:57] But additionally, I just really like the idea that we're giving back foundational amino acids. They're going to help us recover and structurally rebuild damaged tissue from our workout. I do tend to keep it to functional foods. We've got to make sure co-factors are present. We've got to make sure our B-vitamins are set. A lot of times, when we're craving our carbs, this is our predominant source for our B-vitamins, our base co-factors for every energy.

## Episode 22: Body Composition and Weight Loss

[21:24] *Cassy Price*: Absolutely, and magnesium, as well. Throughout our conversation, you mentioned that protein doesn't have the same effects as carbs. Does that mean that you most often go for a low-carb approach with your customers?

[21:37] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Not always. As long as it's not no-carb. Again, those that want to exercise ketogenic, we can work with you. We can make it work, but for those that go absolutely no-carb, that is tough. It's so hard, both on your mental focus, but also that drain. It takes a while to get into that. But, lower carb, especially if you're looking to drop pounds.

[22:02] *Cassy Price*: Okay. So, no refined carbs then. That includes things like sugar, pops, treats, etc. And by cutting those, you could be cutting calories by up to 30% in some cases. Right?

[22:13] *Dr. Aaron Zadek*: Well, it's really important because our body wasn't designed to process liquid carbohydrates. There was no place from humans 15,000 years ago wandering around where they would find, "Oh, look. The great wild coca-cola or the orange juice." This really didn't exist. Our body recognized we were full based off of stretch receptors in the stomach, and leptin hormone loops, and "Hey, we've had enough."

[22:41] But when we're constantly drinking a lot of our calories, be it through pop, be it through adding sugar to our juices, our body doesn't get the same "Hey, did you just consume 400 calories? Did that just happen?" There's no signal.

[22:57] *Cassy Price*: This has been a very enlightening conversation. Thank you so much, Dr. Zadek, for joining me today. We will definitely need to have you back to talk more about your area of expertise in sports medicine and some of the other ways that people can improve their training regimes.

[23:12] As well, thank you to all the listeners who tuned in this week to Supplementing Health. We'd love to see you join us again next week to learn about burnout and how you can prevent it, with Jordon Bruce.

*\* \* \* Outro Music \* \* \**

*Thank you for listening to Supplementing Health. For more information about our guests, past shows, and future topics, please visit [AOR.ca/podcasts](https://aor.ca/podcasts) or [AOR.us/podcasts](https://aor.us/podcasts). Do you have a topic you want us to cover? We invite you to engage with us on social media to request a future topic or email us at [marketing@aor.ca](mailto:marketing@aor.ca). We hope you tune in again next week to learn more about supplementing your health.*

[End of episode 23:55]