



- Triathlon Taren: What's up trainiacs, this is Triathlon Taren.
- No Triathlon Kim: And this is No Triathlon Kim also known as NTK.
- Triathlon Taren: In my 20s, I was 215 pounds and I was unhappy working the desk job I was at. Now I'm the 941 Iron Man athlete who, with your much appreciated attention gets to make a living in the sport that I love. Through this podcast and our ever popular YouTube channel, we bring you triathlon stories, science and training from amazing people around the world to help you get to your start lines confident and your finish lines strong.
- No Triathlon Kim: And as the resident non triathlete, I try to keep the show fun and accessible for everybody.
- Triathlon Taren: Let's do it. Today's podcast is brought to you by teamtrainiac.com. And I'm going to say that so dramatically because it is hands down the best triathlon training platform that we have ever created.
- No Triathlon Kim: Good, good save.
- Triathlon Taren: So teamtrainiac.com, it is the online training program that is currently a web app later this year, I promise all trainiac athletes. So there is going to be an app on your phone coming out, we're just doing the wire frames and planning out how that's going to happen. And what you can get on teamtrainiac.com is your full year of triathlon training. Whether you can fit in four workouts a week or 14 workouts a week, whether you're doing a sprint triathlon or an Ironman triathlon, whether you can only work out on the weekend or you have shift work or anything like that, all of this is customised based on just about 60 seconds of inputting the information that you want to plan out. And then your plan is created for you automatically with a workout every single day that you want to work out, and video guidance and audio guidance on how and why to train that way.
- No Triathlon Kim: And, and if you are a raw rookie, a first timer doing a sprint or a first timer doing an Ironman distance race, or someone who's been doing it for a few years, everything in between, regardless of what your goals are, there's something for everybody. There's something for everybody.

Triathlon Taren: One of those things is actually freebies, if you are a first timer you might be overwhelmed by a lot of the costs that have to come up with bikes and shoes and helmets and wheels and race entries, and all the travel gear that we need. It gets expensive. All of our partners, our sponsors throughout the year are offering Team Trainiac athletes freebies. So there's a little benefit to you.

No Triathlon Kim: And always discounts. There's always discounts on the website for our athletes as well.

Triathlon Taren: So if you're interested in that, you can go check out a 14 day free trial at [teamtrainiac.com](http://teamtrainiac.com). Today's guest is my nutritionist, The Natural Nutritionist Steph Lowe. We've had her on the podcast before. Dan Plews takes care of my coaching. He also takes care of manipulating what days and when I have carbs, but what I was finding over the course of 2019, is that I was actually gaining weight on a lower carb approach, and I was constantly hungry. So there's definitely something that we're missing. I reached out to Steph Lowe, who is a nutritionist based out of Australia. And she's been working with me on saying, all right, yeah, here are the macro nutrients that you need to be successful as per Dan's instructions. But what are the exact foods? What are the foods that you need? Is it potatoes? Is it sweet potatoes? Is it overnight oats? Is it broccoli? What is it? And what are the supplements that you can be taking? As we were going through all of that, and I've been documenting my journey about lower carb, we've had many, many messages from women saying that it's very different for females.

No Triathlon Kim: And so today, and we'll preface this for any male triathletes, listen to this too, because you're going to learn something. This isn't just for women.

Triathlon Taren: Especially male triathlete coaches should know this.

No Triathlon Kim: Yes, absolutely, male triathlete coaches. But male triathletes, if you've got a woman in your life, maybe you're going to want to learn some things here today because Steph breaks things down in such an easy-to-understand way. But we are talking about eating for women who are training. And whether that's low carb, fasting, calories, what have you, we kind of cover the whole gamut here. And it's super interesting because women and men aren't the same. I know we know that. But especially when we're talking about nutrition for triathletes, for endurance athletes, there's some pretty significant differences and ways to gauge, that men cannot gauge. And yeah, just fascinating stuff, it's absolutely brilliant, but makes things so simple and easy to understand.

Triathlon Taren: If after listening to this podcast, or maybe you've seen some of the stuff that we've done with Steph already, you're interested in just learning more about her approach to nutrition planning, and even maybe thinking about consulting whether, if you go to [triathlontaren.com/steph](http://triathlontaren.com/steph) S-T-E-P-H, there's a free starter pack that explains how she's gone about her approach with me. And then you can also get a discount on working with her directly. So [triathlontaran.com/steph](http://triathlontaran.com/steph), just put in your email address, and you can start

customising your own approach to this. And thanks Steph, always a pleasure to talk with you.

So, let's start off here Steph, with the elephant in the room that I think we have to address. As I started going LCHF, and no matter how many times in YouTube videos I would say, just flat out for females, it's a little different, and you should look into how this is going to work and be a little bit more careful. There are a lot of female triathletes who have read Stacy Sims, who is very much on the other side of things, and basically saying that low carb and fasting and all these things that I'm talking about and you're a proponent of as a female, is just outright dangerous for women. Can we just start this podcast here head-on with addressing your beliefs and what you found on that?

Steph Lowe:

Yeah, look, I think we do have to acknowledge that the majority of the research up to this point in time has been done on college age men. Because it's largely a funding issue, and usually women are excluded from a study because of the influence of their hormones and how that would influence the data. So I respect Stacy's work to no end, and I think we have to really acknowledge that we can't apply literature or studies on men to women. We don't want to do that. But I also think that everyone is really unique. That it's more nuanced, again, than just saying, all women need to eat high carb or all women shouldn't do any fasted training. To me that's taking things a little bit to the other end of the spectrum. And I say this all the time, but it's about finding that middle ground and also experimenting too what works for you.

Because you and I, Taren, aren't talking about keto, or 25 grams of carbs a day, or 50 grams of carbs a day. The acronym that I like the best when we look at LCHF, actually is lower carbohydrate, healthy fat. So that lower word is really important when we look at what the comparison is. So it's lower than the food pyramid, you know, so it's lower than 400 or 600 grams of carbs a day, that's a good thing right, because of what we've been told in the Western world to eat, in terms of that food pyramid that has been so carbohydrate heavy for so long.

So we have to break down the acronym and look at the difference between what we're actually uncovering. You know, we're not talking about keto. And furthermore, the specific macronutrients or ratios that we look at for males and females are different within LCHF. So we can unpack that as well.

Triathlon Taren:

Have you seen any detrimental side effects from female athletes that start going lower carb?

Steph Lowe:

So I think that for female athletes, our menstrual cycle is our monthly report card. So the answer to your question is yes, if someone goes too low carb for them, probably also if they're doing too much high intensity training for them, they're not periodising their training, and they lose their menstrual cycle, then of course, what they're doing is not working. So it's possible, but that shouldn't mean that LCHF doesn't work, it means the version that you've started with wasn't quite right. And it's time to either take a deeper

dive to educate yourself or get some personalised support to what nuances, what changes will help optimise that whole foods approach for you.

No Triathlon Kim: So let's talk numbers then, because of course people are going to say, all right, then what is too low? So what is the range that we would be looking at that would be, and again, realising that it's going to be different for every single woman, and person, but what's the range we're looking at that typically ends up being a decent healthy range that still allows you to be lower carb, but maintain the health of the menstrual cycle?

Steph Lowe: Yeah, for sure. So if we look at rough calories to start, let's use some numbers that a female athlete might be having, say on a rest day, 1700 calories. 20% of that would give us, let me get my maths happening here. 20% of that would be 340 calories. If we divide that by four, it's about 85 grams of carbohydrates per day. So that would be an example of what our rest day carbohydrate requirements would be. So then if we, maybe 2200 calories on a training day where it might be a one hour or a 90-minute session. So 2200, if we look at what 20% of that is, that's 440, divide that by four, it's 110. So it might be 85 to 110 grams of carbohydrates per day. But if we're an endurance athlete that's been doing two or more hours of training, that could take that one or two days a week up to about 150 grams of carbohydrates on that day, so not every day of the week, but as a function of your training, and obviously how many calories you're burning. Because 20% is your goal, like 20% carbohydrates per day. So the percentage doesn't change. But clearly the grams of carbohydrates per day will change based on how long you're training for, or if it's a rest day.

Triathlon Taren: So here's an interesting thing. I'm hearing numbers that are basically identical to what I'm doing. What I have found is that sweet spot that we just talked about a little bit off air, is that I try to get into that 110 to 130 grams of carbs per day. And this is where I'm starting to get lots of messages on Instagram from females that are saying, what you're doing is dangerous for women, Taren. And you're telling us that, no, not necessarily.

Steph Lowe: Oh, I don't see what's dangerous about a whole foods diet. The interesting thing, if you looked at it the other way, so if we reverse engineered this. If we thought, all right, so we know the food pyramid is usually to blame for what's going on in the West health-wise, so these avoidable lifestyle diseases. So we know the food pyramid is too high in carbohydrate. Now, if we simply started with whole foods, so if we moved away from refined carbohydrates that are in a packet or a box, and we looked at whole food carbohydrates like fruit and vegetables, if we were really understanding, okay, plants are the foundation for everyone, regardless of your dietary preference, outside of our carnivore friends, of course, but we need to be starting with plants. And we navigate our way through quality protein, from a hormonal point of view, that we also need healthy fats, then we will land way lower than 200 grams per day just naturally.

So someone who's maybe feeling a little bit angry or not quite understanding what we're trying to achieve here with a whole foods diet, maybe don't try to eat to fit your macros, just eat normally. And then have a

look at where you're at. It's going to be less than 200 grams a day, when you're eating a whole food diet, especially when you know you're sticking to what we would nearly always recommend, as like no more than two servings of fruit a day. It's really only when you start to go a little bit crazy on the fruit that your whole foods diet would become too high carbohydrate.

No Triathlon Kim: So then, we mentioned Stacy Sims and of course she's a PhD, environmental exercise, physiologist and a nutrition scientist. Why then, does she say what she says, which is that this is way too low, not healthy, not good.

Steph Lowe: Well, is she talking about keto, or have you had specifics around the grams per day, because that's where I think a lot of the detail gets left out. Even this week I got sent a research paper around how low carb is detrimental to bone density in runners, right? But when you actually looked at the study, the macronutrients split was very low carbohydrate, like five to 10%, the protein was about the same, and the fats was super high by contrast, at about 75 or 80%. So that's not the same diet. That is not the same food on one's plate. So we really have to make sure we're understanding. Firstly, if it is literature that we're looking at, what has been prescribed, so what percentage of our carbohydrates, proteins and fats were precisely examined in that specific study? And then also food quality because Taren, you and I have spoken about this off air a lot, anything can fit your macros, like there's a whole movement that's called, If It Fits Your Macros, that could completely disregard food quality.

So a study that simply says, 10% carb, 20% protein, 70% fat is very different when we're actually looking at what foods we're eating. So a lot of fibre to feed the microbiome. Obviously, the literature around fibre and health is crystal clear. Looking at protein quality, so that in itself, like of your 20% protein, where is it coming from? Is it coming from soy protein isolate? Or is it coming from pasture raised eggs? And then fats even more so, is 70% of your fat coming from vegetable oil like canola oil? Or are you looking at beautiful anti-inflammatory fats like our omega threes, like olive oil or oily fish, we've got to unpack the studies and really run a fine-tooth comb through them, before extrapolating the data to a whole food diet that is purely driven by quality. And very different from a macronutrient profile.

No Triathlon Kim: So then you mentioned the word keto, and I want to go there because that, again, is such a controversial word. And actually, Taren just, you reminded me that his mum tried keto, and it backfired horrendously for her, I think talking about food quality and specific choices around that is probably where that is from. But then talk to us about keto. Because people confuse lower carb healthy fat and keto, they think that's all the same thing. So then talk to us about keto for women.

Steph Lowe: Yeah, I think you're right in what you say. People do think it's the same thing. And that's where it's really tricky, because there isn't a fixed definition at the moment. So there isn't even a fixed macronutrient definition, so that's how we can see these conversations become far too extrapolated rather than us understanding the details. So keto, I mean, look, if we were to look at it at the end of the spectrum, so it would be very low

carbohydrate. So some people prescribe 25 grams of carbs a day, maybe it's about 50 grams of carbohydrates per day. So it's in that range, depending on usually the individual. So if there is some significant chronic long term metabolic syndrome, obesity, type two diabetes, then it's much lower, it's towards that 25 grams of carbohydrates per day. That's not really our point, but it is the bottom end of the spectrum when it comes to carbohydrates.

And then we can go all the way towards the other end, which is what we would look at for lower carbohydrate, healthy fat, where for most people, the maximum is about 150 grams of carbs per day. I would say that's where most females would sit comfortably. Of course, you need to work out what's right for you. The definition of LCHF can go as high as 200 grams of carbohydrates per day. So see how there's a lot of differences in what we're actually talking about, because that is actually a scale where someone could be doing 25 grams of carbs a day, and believing it to be exactly the same as 200 grams of carbs per day, not to mention the differences in food quality that could be across that entire spectrum.

No Triathlon Kim:

So then let's for a second, ignore the food quality issue and, there are women now... because you can buy them so readily, buy the keto strips from the store and test their urine to see if they are in ketosis and they're trying to stay in ketosis, is that a good or bad idea? And I will just add on to that by saying, there's a lot of women who will do it, lose a bunch of weight really quickly, they're so excited, it worked for me, I feel amazing. But on the other end of it, you're hearing women who do it for too long, or at least I have heard from women who do it for too long. And it starts to backfire. And things like you talk about menstrual cycles start to get a little wonky, and people are not putting two and two together. What is your feeling on actually, women being in ketosis?

Steph Lowe:

So that's a huge question. Let's break it down into a few parts. Keto strips are basically designed, well, they were initially designed for diabetics. So the actual function of those sticks is to measure the ketones in the urine, which yes, tells your body you're in ketosis. But you don't have to be eating 25 grams of carbs a day to be producing ketones. Every time you burn fat, a by product is a ketone. So if you are burning fat, and eating 200 grams of carbs per day, you are still producing ketones. It just depends on how efficient you are. And certainly usually how long you've been doing it for, because you get efficient over time. What people forget about, when it comes to those keto strips, is if the ketones are in your urine, they're actually not being utilised by the body. So usually it looks like this. Initially, you drop your carbs. And over this time of like four to seven days, your body switches gears, so you go from sugar burning to fat burning, because you're still not very efficient at that point in time, you're losing a lot of ketones in your urine, so you'll get a positive reading on those sticks.

If and when you stick at it, and continue your dietary intervention beyond seven days, you get more efficient. So the ketones are then burned for fuel, they are no longer in your urine. So you can do a keto stick and get a negative reading and freak out thinking that it hasn't worked or you've "kicked yourself out of keto", but that's actually largely incorrect. But

outside of stress and changes to the dietary intervention, a negative reading on the keto stick can actually show you that you're using those ketones, which is what you want. Even just using one example of beta-Hydroxybutyrate, the sort of probably more well-known ketone, if you're burning that for energy, that's when you're starting to feel really good. So you've passed through that first phase, which a lot of people call the keto flu or we say it's the metabolic grey zone, and that's when you feel like you've got control over your appetite and your cravings. Increased mental clarity, you start to maybe even notice decreased inflammation, because ketones by nature are anti-inflammatory.

So that's the first part. But again, as a female, your menstrual cycle is your monthly report card. So if you notice any changes in your menstrual cycle, then don't wait for another couple of months before you acknowledge that flashing red line. Dive in deeper to either education or literature, getting a little bit of outside support, and tweak what you're doing. It usually means that one, your carbs are too low. And/or two, your healthy fats are not high enough. Three, there's stress which is driving up your blood glucose levels via cortisol. Or four, it's basically a combination of the above plus gut dysbiosis or some other illness like adrenal dysfunction that you haven't yet unpacked.

But before I get sort of too far ahead, it doesn't mean that a whole food lower carbohydrate diet isn't for you, but it's like the version that you've started with, perhaps isn't quite right. I don't think it means that you have to throw the baby out with the bathwater though, and start being super high carb and perpetuating that sugar burning metabolism that we are trying so hard to move away from.

Triathlon Taren:

So can I ask a question here? I heard a podcast once with Dominic D'Agostino, who is one of the more well-known keto researchers, huge proponent of it for a number of factors, has done a lot of keto testing on himself, a lot of publications and even he, who is a huge proponent of being in ketosis and ketones just as a molecule that is really helpful to your body. Even he says that being in ketosis is really only good for about a third of the population. Now, just my Canadian math says, all right, well, half the population is female. So theoretically, and what he says is, it on average works best and better for younger, overweight men. So I'm just kind of doing rough math here, and wondering like, is the question not, all right, well lower carb only works for men, doesn't work for women, is the question more, well, there's a higher proportion of men that will do better on ketosis than women? And there will be more women out there that have an experience like my mum, where their monthly report card doesn't come in.

I'm trying to think of a classy way for a guy to say this, their monthly report card doesn't come in with a good.

No Triathlon Kim:

It fails.

Triathlon Taren:

It fails.

No Triathlon Kim: How about that?

Triathlon Taren: How about that.

No Triathlon Kim: That's safe.

Triathlon Taren: Yeah, it fails. And it's something that has to be much more kept in-check, much more closely watched over for females than males. Is that more of the question that the Stacy Sim followers of the world are worried about?

Steph Lowe: That's a really good question. I don't even think that I have the answer for that, of that third, because I love Dom D'Agostino, he is definitely the expert in the field. Of that third, we probably yet haven't understood, does it just not suit some men as well? That's not really what we're talking about. But I think what it's worthwhile doing, is circling back to when you were asking me more about macronutrients. And we worked out that range for females where it could be 85 grams a day, maybe 110 grams of carbohydrate, and potentially up to 150 grams. So that is probably a little bit too generic, when we look at an entire month for a female. So if you'll allow me to, I'll break down a menstrual cycle. So we can think about how we might be different in the first half of the month versus the second half of the month. Because this is where it can be a lot more nuanced for a female.

So very top level, but we have two very distinct phases of a month, right. So phase one is our follicular phase. Some people call it the low hormone phase, but essentially it's from day one, which is the day that you bleed to roughly the middle of the month when you ovulate. So this is where progesterone remains quite low. The second half of the cycle is luteal phase. And that's from ovulation to the end of the cycle. And we call that the high hormone phase. So if we break down those two halves, in the follicular phase, women usually feel their best. That's where, if you've got a coach who programs you as a female athlete, will put more of your key sessions, more all of your efforts, obviously periodised, but you're doing a lot more of those key sessions, certainly before ovulation. Then in the high hormone phase, that's where you should be programming lower intensity, more rest days, really starting to work with how you're feeling. And many people, many women need to start to take a few more days off in the lead up to their period arriving. So maybe it's three or four days.

Now, our requirements, our energy requirements are also quite different for the halves of the month. And most women do find that LCHF feels like a better fit for them in that first phase, in that follicular phase, They might then find towards ovulation or bang on the middle of the month, they need to have more carbohydrates, and I'll come back to what that looks like in a minute. But then in that true second half of the cycle, they might need slightly more again. So maybe more days at 150 grams of carbohydrates per day. And every female has a really different cycle. So there's obviously iterations of that, but that's like a top level view. And so if you do a more traditional LCHF template for the first two weeks of the month around ovulation, you might need to add more resistant starch. So more cooked and cooled sweet potato or oatmeal if that's your thing, or white potato or

basmati rice. And then maybe towards the onset of your period again, you might increase your carb with a little bit more fruit.

It's still not high carb, it's still not refined carbohydrates, but definitely for females, it's acknowledging how we work with that month. Because we do have essentially four seasons in a month. But there is definitely those two distinct phases where our nutrition and our training should look quite different.

Triathlon Taren: I'm fascinated by this. This is actually the first that I've heard it broken down so straightforward.

No Triathlon Kim: He's making a lot of faces, Steph.

Triathlon Taren: Yeah, I made a couple faces there.

No Triathlon Kim: So then.

Steph Lowe: And then.

No Triathlon Kim: Go ahead.

Steph Lowe: Go on.

No Triathlon Kim: No, you go ahead.

Steph Lowe: I was just going to say, and then if we look into the start of this cycle, from a training and nutrition perspective, yes, our period is our monthly report card. But it also is for so many other reasons in that, we don't really understand what's normal, right? So I talk to all my female clients about their menstrual cycle, and almost none of them really know what their cycle should look like. I think that's a lot to do with the fact that our generation have largely been suggested the pill, when anything's been a little bit outside the norm. That's not to say that everyone's taking the pill. But if we've ever had an issue, whether it was a heavy period or pain at ovulation, or quite significant premenstrual syndrome in the lead-up to our period arriving, we've pretty much only had a band aid of a pharmaceutical intervention offered. And that hijacks your cycle.

It actually takes your natural hormones offline. And the bleed is not a period, it's a withdrawal bleed from that pharmaceutical intervention. So what we're talking about doesn't apply to someone who's on the pill, just to make sure that we set that expectation. Because your cycle is the pharmaceutical intervention, it's not actually your hormones. But for those that are having any of the symptoms, like the heavy bleed or the ovulation pain mid-month or the PMS, that could obviously really impact your training. So you're probably really loving that you're hearing, okay, I can do less at this time. I can switch some of my sessions around. And I think that's very important. But I also don't think it's normal to be suffering. When you are in balance, when you're ticking all your boxes from a nutrition, a training and a lifestyle point of view, your period should pretty much arrive without you

knowing about it, and you shouldn't be suffering and you certainly shouldn't have lots of PMS in the three to four days or even longer, to your period arriving.

So it kind of goes both ways. Like yes, definitely change your training, change your nutrition, work with your hormones, and learn about your menstrual cycle. But also do more. If there's an imbalance. You shouldn't have to suffer. And if you are, it's a red light that something needs to change.

No Triathlon Kim: I'm so glad that you talked about that. Because, not many women actually know that. Most women think PMS, cramps, acne, all that is normal, because that's what we've been taught by society. And it isn't at all. So super glad you said that. Now, here's another question, the next step of question that I wanted to ask, where does fasting come into play with any of this? Because again, that's another thing that we hear two completely different things; fasting, yeah, go ahead, it's great. On the other hand, no, it's awful for women, don't do it, never do it, whether that be a daily eating window, so called intermittent fasting, longer fasts, whatever the case, and that fasting will negatively affect your menstrual cycle, etc. So, let's get into the fasting conversation then.

Steph Lowe: Yeah, so I think it's important that we have some definitions. If we even take a step back, everyone fasts. Firstly, everyone fasts overnight, right? So fasting by itself is not dangerous. We all fast, it's normal. From when you finish eating of an evening, to when you wake up the next day and put some food in your mouth or even some calories and your mouth is still a fast. So we really have to be careful as to how dramatic we get over this word. Just because people on YouTube are doing ridiculous, like, either water only or unsupervised complete fasts, doesn't mean that the word fasting is evil. And that's, I can hear my voice start to rage, obviously pisses me off, because we need to define what we're talking about. Firstly, what is the definition of fasting? So we all fast, it's completely normal. Then there's been the popularity around 16:8s. Let's unpack that first. So a 16:8 is a really popular protocol where you fast for 16 hours, and you eat in an eight-hour window. So that has become really popular, and I think that suits men, I think most men can do that quite well.

I never get my female athletes to do a lot of 16:8, for reasons like their hormonal support, how different their month looks, you know, from the first half to the second half. But I still think that telling someone to eat when they're not hungry, is losing that ability to eat intuitively. So we can't assume that every female needs to eat at 7:00 AM. We can't put every single female in the same box because there's going to be so much individual variation within that group. And I think that's important to look at. Then if we look at the literature, when we're looking at fasting, are we looking at people who are fat adapted? Anyone who tries to fast, who isn't fat-adapted is going to find it really challenging. Because your appetite or your body is bound by eating, if that's what you've trained to always do. So I don't think fasting is where we start, where we start is whole foods, balancing our blood sugar, managing inflammation, all of which is created by

the previous. And setting up this beautiful foundation in what we do day-to-day.

If we then notice that we feel good when we have a slightly later breakfast or a slightly earlier dinner, or a combination of the above, then that's just the next step in our fasting. It doesn't need to be 16:8, it might look like 13:11, with a 13-hour fast and an 11-hour eating window. So we're still talking day-to-day. There's lots of different ways that can work as a function of that adaptation, of your body getting better and more efficient at selecting our anti-inflammatory fuel. Then when it comes to training, it can look quite different. But we still need to acknowledge that anyone who's not fat adapted, that's starting to do faster training, is going to find that really hard. Taren, obviously you're a male, but I'm sure you can relate to when you first started, how there really is that adaptation phase. So the same thing applies to females.

I rarely get my athletes to do zero calories, so no calories prior to a fasted session. A lot of people feel like first thing in the morning, they don't have an appetite. They certainly don't want to get up 90 minutes or two hours prior to a session. So something like an MCT coffee or an MCT decaf coffee can work really well for them. And that might give them 200 calories, it's liquid, so it's easy to digest. So it's not giving us any of that digestive stress which solid food in the gut can do when the blood flow is directed inwards, rather than outwards. And it means that we're still getting some beautiful fat burning benefits out of our training, but it's not zero calories or stressful for the body.

Then the final thing is, well, what is fasted training? What is the definition of that? You know, there are people on the internet who think that they can do fasted training for five hours, which I completely disagree with. When you first start, you might do 60 minutes. And that might be enough for you, until the end of time. But you might also find that 90 minutes serves you well over time. But it's a process that you take quite slowly. There is no need to rush. And I definitely think try both. If you're doing a lot of aerobic training, it makes intuitive sense to not need carbohydrates before training, because aerobic sessions are fuelled on the fat oxidation system. But if you're doing more high intensity sessions, then many people, males included, feel better with some carbohydrate combined with some fats for blood glucose control, before a high intensity session.

So see how we need definitions. We also need to talk about durations, intensity and those more specifics between individual women, not just women as a whole.

Triathlon Taren:

So, speaking specifically about fasted training, personally, my experience is that if I do a session completely fasted and don't eat a lot during, I can be ravenous after. Like that's a real nail in the coffin with my hunger, that you and I are trying to work through. And again, well I'll say this phrase that you like that I've picked up, when you look at the literature, there isn't a lot of evidence showing that outright, empty stomach, no calorie fasted training has any benefit beyond just carb fasted training. So when I look at myself,

and I say, all right, I know that there is detrimental effects to outright fasted training, and just carb fasted training doesn't really have... it isn't any worse than outright fasted training. So in that case, I always err on the side of starting even low intensity workouts, with some calories in my stomach. Now, that said, I know that females have a much higher likelihood of having hormonal issues with outright fasted training.

Triathlon Taren: So my take on things has always been, I know that there's a negative side effect and a chance for a negative occurrence with outright fasted training for even men. And it's even more likely for women. So I have just always kind of said, you know what, I don't think women should even try to play that game of chicken with fasted training for the potential for maybe an additional benefit. I didn't really have a question in that.

Steph Lowe: No, that's okay. I understand what you're saying. And then I think we need to come back to the menstrual cycle. You know, if we're looking at say day three of our cycle where testosterone starts to increase, we naturally start to feel quite good, quite motivated. At the same time, estrogen increases. And that's a pretty solid recipe for good training. So you might feel like you can do some fasted training there with some calories, obviously. Again, defining what fasted is, and not trying to be too extreme with how long you go. Like it doesn't need to be to even two hours. And then if your hormones don't feel... like if you don't feel that great with ovulation, if there are such big shifts for you personally, and you feel more flat mid month, then change it up. And then in that luteal phase, again, when you've got that decline of the hormone, so decline of estrogen and progesterone, if you're feeling like you're suffering, obviously do something about it longer term, but don't add more into the picture. Like don't feel like you have to do the same thing at the start of the month as you do at the back end of the month.

I think that's where this conversation, you know, it's not discussed enough. So we tend to look for black and white rules, many triathletes are also quite extreme in nature and we forget that we can manipulate and experiment with guidelines instead of rules. And also for females specifically, one, have a goal of balancing out hormones, so there's a lot less of the shifts across the month beyond what is a normal hormonal fluctuation. And then adapt our nutrition and our training to suit.

No Triathlon Kim: Okay, I have about 52 questions lined up here.

Triathlon Taren: We have about six minutes.

No Triathlon Kim: Right, I know, Steph's got to go. Okay, so actually.

Steph Lowe: We'll need a part two.

No Triathlon Kim: I'll go with this quickly. So I'll use myself as an example then. I eat when I'm hungry and only when I'm hungry. And I guess I have a fairly short eating window. Most days, I'm not really hungry for anything until 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning. We eat dinner around six or seven, I don't ever eat after dinner, and I don't snack. So I have a short eating window, and I don't eat a

ton in my eating window. I only eat when I really feel hungry. Am I doing it wrong or... and keeping in mind too, I am not an endurance athlete.

Triathlon Taren: You do occasionally exercise in the morning, before you've eaten.

No Triathlon Kim: Right, but Taren has sort of said that seems.

Triathlon Taren: That worries me.

No Triathlon Kim: Seems to be a bad idea. So am I doing it wrong? Because I think a lot of women kind of do what I do, or maybe they don't, I don't know.

Steph Lowe: Well, what's your menstrual cycle like?

No Triathlon Kim: It's good, basically.

Steph Lowe: I rest my case, your honour.

No Triathlon Kim: Okay. All right. Great, we've gotten that out of the way.

Triathlon Taren: There, five minutes still left.

No Triathlon Kim: Right, I have another question though. So we've talked about-

Steph Lowe: Well I mean, there's more to that obviously, Kim, with outside, like what your health looks like and what your blood tests look like and what your gut looks like, of course. But again, your menstrual cycle is a really great monthly report card. I was doing 16:8s, seven days a week and I lost my cycle, what an idiot. But I learned the hard way. So for me, that was a really interesting experience, to then all right, let's peel it back. Let's work out how to get the best of both worlds and track your cycle. So get an app. Have a look at how you feel in that first phase, that follicular phase. Check-in with symptoms at ovulation, check-in with how you're feeling in your luteal phase, learn about your cycle. Most women don't do this. They don't even know what ovulation is.

No Triathlon Kim: Oh, I do. I've got all the apps. Okay, we only have a couple minutes. So I do want to ask you this other question. We've talked about low carb, we've talked about macros, we've talked about fasting, do calories come into play here at all? Because calories are you know something women obsess about. Should women, and I guess because we're appealing to a triathlon audience, female triathletes or women in general, should we be worrying about calories then on any level?

Steph Lowe: Well, yeah, you can still eat too much. But I said to you before on a rest day, we might be having 1700 calories and on a one-hour training day, it might be 2200. For a lot of women, especially anyone that's tried out our archaic 1200 calorie weight loss approaches, that freaks them out to no end. Even hearing those numbers feels like weight gain, because of that very outdated calorie in calorie out model. So we need to understand how much we're eating because our macros are a percentage of that. So you can't say 20%

carbohydrate if you don't know how much you're eating. So I'd like to work with those percentages, because then it gives you a varying degree of grams per day. Because 20% of 1700 is 85, and as we worked out 20% of 2200 calories is 110 grams of carbs per day. So we still need to know how much we're eating, but like you've experienced firsthand, Kim, and most people experience, is when you get the balance right, when quality is your focus, when you've got good blood sugar control, which is a function of plant proteins, healthy fat, you naturally work out where your calories land.

You're not hungry, you're not counting, you're not restrictive, your body works out what you need. And that's because you focused on quality, and you're not eating carbs that spike your blood sugar and determine your ongoing food choices. It's like Physiology 101, when we look at what carbs do to our blood sugar, like Taren, you know that firsthand and anyone who's ever either used a continual blood glucose monitor, or just tapped in with how I feel after a massive bowl of pasta, will know how different you feel. And food has the largest influence on our blood glucose levels.

No Triathlon Kim: Is it different for endurance athletes versus women who focus strictly on weight training?

Steph Lowe: In terms of what, calories?

No Triathlon Kim: No, just in terms of all of this. Does this stay the same if women are doing endurance training versus if they strictly do weight training?

Steph Lowe: Well, it's a function of intensity. So it really depends on what their weight training looks like. So I think we need to define the type of exercise that we do by heart rate, because that determines what energy system we're using. So weight training, especially if we're talking about heavy lifting, there would potentially be more carbohydrates in that week, because of the heart rate response to that kind of a lift. So let's say, she might start on 20% carbohydrates, but on a training day, that 110 grams doesn't feel like quite enough, I'm open to someone going up to 25% carbohydrate, 20% protein and adjusting their fats accordingly. But it still will fit in an LCHF template, it's still lower than 200 grams per day, but it's just that they might have more carbohydrates more frequently, than an endurance athlete who's doing mostly aerobic, so low intensity sessions.

No Triathlon Kim: We could go and go and go and go.

Triathlon Taren: I have a question that I think is an entire other podcast, maybe a book idea for you that I'm sure knowing you, you're probably thinking about-

No Triathlon Kim: Probably already writing it.

Triathlon Taren: ... because I'm fascinated watching what you're cooking for your daughter, who's just starting to eat solid food. And I'm sure you're thinking about developing a healthy tummy and microbiota for her. I think that needs to be another podcast, because I'm looking at it and I'm like, ooh, did Steph put together those overnight oats for her, to develop good, healthy infant

tummy? I was thinking that. So I think that's a talk for another day. But yeah, I think this was a great chat, to understand that as you and I chatted on your show, just before we started on this podcast, that it isn't as black and white. Nothing with nutrition is as black and white as everyone who's male should be keto, everyone who's female should be high carb or vice versa, whatever it is. We have to look at the individual. And specifically with what you've done with me, that's what we've started fine tuning. That's how we're going to get my stomach healthy and get this LCHF approach really, highly functioning for me. So this is great, thanks Steph. Always great.

Steph Lowe: Yeah, awesome. There's so much we could cover, like time flies when you're having fun. But yeah, I'd love to keep the conversation going and look forward to talking to you guys again soon.

No Triathlon Kim: So where should people follow you if they want to tap into your wealth of knowledge? And clearly you have a wealth of knowledge, where do you want people to go to find you and start to get some of these nuggets for themselves?

Steph Lowe: Yeah, thank you so much. I hang out on Instagram at The Natural Nutritionist, and then my website [thenaturalnutritionist.com.au](http://thenaturalnutritionist.com.au). And you can find all the links on how to reach out to me there and other social media platforms. So come and say hi and let me know if you have any questions. And I'm sure we can make a part two, because there's always so much more we could cover.

Triathlon Taren: Awesome. Thanks Steph.

No Triathlon Kim: Thank you Steph.

Thank you for listening. If you are a regular listener of the show, obviously, you're into it. You don't need to share it with a friend or anything like that. But a review on iTunes helps us rank higher so more trainiacs can find us and hear us.

Triathlon Taren: And if you have made it this far into the show, you're clearly into some good triathlon audio experiences. So we've put together a free audio mini course that you can get by going to [triathlonteran.com/triathlonkeys](http://triathlonteran.com/triathlonkeys). All you have to do is put in your email address and you'll get the free mini course series where I talk about the only three scientifically proven factors that have consistently shown up in study after study that play a major role in successful triathlon performances. And the info of what those key things are will surprise you. It sure surprised me. It's not previous history as an athlete, it's not max bike power. It's not even the amount of training done each week. I was really surprised when I found out what these three factors are, as they kept popping up across all these studies that I found.

No Triathlon Kim: In the audio course Taren will explain what these factors are, what most people think will result in good triathlon performances, but actually are a waste of time, and how you can change your training to set yourself up for

the best race possible. So go to [triathlontaren.com/triathlonkeys](http://triathlontaren.com/triathlonkeys) and check it out.

Triathlon Taren: We'll see you in the next episode.