

DEAR ROSA

CONTRACEPTIVE PILL

Hi Rosa,

Just a quick question. I am entering a figure competition in six weeks and wondering if most female competitors stop taking the contraceptive pill. Is six weeks too late to stop? I've never had any problems on the pill but I'm willing to stop taking it if it will give me that extra edge.

Marissa,
Queensland

Hi Marissa,

This is a personal choice and there really is no right or wrong answer here. I don't see why you would have to stop taking the pill if you are eating and training correctly. Your body will still become conditioned, as you get closer to the show as long as you stick to the plan. I can tell you though that some pills have been proven to cause a decrease in VO₂max/endurance performance but nothing is for certain. Try not to focus too much attention on this issue, as I can't see it making a huge difference. You may wish to speak to your doctor and ask for his/her opinion and then decide for yourself what's best. You may also wish to weigh up the 'pros and cons'. You will see below that the pros and cons of the oral contraceptive pill use for female athletes have great benefits, which appear to outweigh the costs:

ADVANTAGES

- » Highly effective, convenient and reversible
- » Provides a source of oestrogen for athletes without periods, decreasing their risk of stress fractures and osteoporosis
- » May decrease menstrual blood loss which

reduces the risk of iron-deficiency anaemia

- » Reduces painful period cramps
- » May decrease premenstrual symptoms (eg mood swings, nausea, headaches) which could have a negative impact on training and competition
- » Can be used to manipulate the menstrual cycle for important events and travel
- » Associated with a decreased risk of cancers of the ovary and uterus
- » No known long-term effect on fertility

DISADVANTAGES

- » Possibility of breakthrough bleeding, fluid retention, weight gain, breast tenderness and headaches (although these usually settle within a few months and can be controlled by changing to a different OCP)
- » No protection from sexually transmitted diseases
- » Associated with a small increased risk of breast cancer in women using OCPs for more than 10 years without having children
- » Possibility of decreased VO₂max/endurance performance

I hope this will help you make the right decision that will best suit your personal needs.

Good luck,

Rosa

TWO CHILDREN

Hi Rosa,

I was just reading your column in the latest Muscle & Fitness and seeing the pictures of you inspired me to want to compete again. You look awesome, might I add. I competed in figure for the first time in Melbourne IFBB in 2003 and then again in 2004. Since then I've had two children (15 months and 3 years old). I'm eager to compete again to prove to myself that a mother of two young kids can do it.

I was wondering if you could offer me some advice on the following. My main problem is not having enough muscle size on my upper body. My legs are naturally bigger and the focus is more on definition for my legs rather than size.

1. How many weight training sessions per week would you recommend twelve months out from a competition and how many cardio sessions? Would you recommend training each bodypart once or twice a week?

2. Is there specific exercises/supplements I can take to help focus on upper body building muscle, particularly back and shoulders?



JULIO ARENAS

3. What supplements do you consider essential in achieving optimal results?

4. Do you recommend a particular brand/type of protein powder?

Also I just wanted to comment on how good you look after having had two children yourself. You are a real inspiration to all mothers and women in general.

Regards,

Violetta Trajcevski

Hi Violetta,

Nice to hear from you. I think I remember you! 2003 was the year I first stepped out onstage also. From what I recall you have a beautiful physique and definitely a lot of potential. Thank goodness you've decided to return to the competition scene. You have the opportunity to show your children just how great mum is and they will love you for it. Now to answer your questions; you mentioned that you'd had some time off from training.

I recommend you ease your way into weight training to begin with. Try four sessions per week with three cardio sessions added as well. Once your body has adapted I recommend training with weights about five to six days per week. You'll need to build muscle in order to be competitive in Figure and it's important you are symmetrical also.

You mentioned your lower half is heavier than your upper, which is very common for most females. Try keeping your reps anywhere between eight and ten for the upper and keep your legs at 15 to 20 reps, perhaps even 30 depending on how muscular they are.

There really is no right or wrong amount of days you should be training, it's what works for you, your body and your lifestyle, but remember to change your routine every six to eight weeks in order to shock the body and speed up results.

From what you've told me it seems your back may need a little widening? If this is the case then I suggest you incorporate exercises like wide-lat pulldown, chin ups, wide-grip cable row and wide-grip bent-over row. These exercises will help build your lats and widen your back. But don't neglect the centre of your back. You may wish to include a close-grip row and bent-over dumbbell row to your routine just to balance things out a little.

In order to build your shoulders and back make sure you keep your reps low (eight to ten), lift heavy and ensure you are completing a full movement when performing the exercise. Slow, steady and isolate the muscle as you perform each movement.

Now with regards to how many days a week you should train each bodypart, change it from time to time. Sometimes I may train shoulders twice per week, sometimes once. I would stick to either one for at least six weeks then change the routine. Your body needs time to adapt to the exercises before we see changes happening. This takes time. Be consistent and the results will come as you progress with your training.

There are so many supplements on the market with fantastic benefits and proven results, but if I were to narrow it down to a few I recommend you take; Whey Protein Isolate, BCAA, Glutamine, Multi Vitamin, Antioxidant and ZMA. These are vital in the development and growth of your body especially when training to the extreme on a daily basis. There are so many great proteins on the market and it's just a matter of choosing one that you like! I normally go for a protein that is low in carbohydrates and high in protein.

Good luck,

Rosa

FOOD ALLOWANCE

Dear Rosa,

I'm travelling overseas for a show and need to know what food I'm allowed to take on board the plane. I know there are some

restrictions. Being a flight attendant and IFBB Pro, how do you do it? I would love to learn from the best!

Macey,
Victoria

Dear Macey,

People are always curious to know how I manage to juggle this crazy lifestyle! It's really not that hard at all, it just requires a little planning and discipline of course. Firstly, I never eat airline food at all to be honest. I pack all my meals and take them with me. I also have a few spare cans of tuna in my hand luggage as well as rice cakes and peanut butter, just in case I need a little extra fuel whilst working on board. But remember, only 2 x 100 g cans of tuna are permitted on board in your hand luggage.

Having said that, airlines do offer great low-fat meal options but you will need to pre-order when making your booking. You won't be able to take water on board but there is plenty of that available! So as you can see, it's really not that hard at all. A little pre flight organising makes the whole process easy as can be!

Good luck,

Rosa **M&F**



GREG WRIGHT