

Plant-Based Nutrition Coaching

HOW TO BUILD MUSCLE WITH A PLANT-BASED DIET



INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS SCIENCES
ASSOCIATION

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So, Your Client Wants to Follow a Plant-Based Diet...



There's a good deal of myths and half-truths out on the Internet regarding plant-based diets. In more European and American traditions, plant-based diets are often thought of as something relating more to one's ideological stances as opposed to general health and wellness. Additionally, there is the idea that those looking for optimal results need animal proteins and the like in some form to optimize performance.

The ISSA recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all diet that works for everyone, so this content serves to ensure you're up to date on fitness and nutrition trends to stay relevant with clients and their unique needs and goals. So, let's dig into the specifics of a plant-based diet to see what your client may have to consider if they decide it meets their needs.

The Basics of a Plant-Based Diet

A plant-based diet is a diet that is free from animal products. There are many different variations, based on a person's goals. But the strictest definition comes down to fruits, vegetables, legumes, grains, lentils and beans, nuts, and everything else that comes from the ground.

This strictest version would be classified as a vegan diet. A vegan diet excludes all animal products in all quantities. Stepping back from this is a traditional vegetarian diet in which a person will also eat dairy products and eggs. Furthermore, a pescatarian diet is one in which a person also includes fish as part of their consumption.

Quality of Animal Protein vs. Plant-Based Protein

One of the biggest sticking points for those opposed to a purely plant-based approach is that proteins contained in plants are "incomplete." What they mean by this is that the source in and of itself isn't what is ideal for humans. We evolved to be omnivores, eating everything. But this has been far overblown in the past few decades.

Whereas it's true that plant-based protein lacks certain amino acids, it's still pretty easy to get these amino acids from other food sources. Plants are chock full of nutrients. There are nine amino acids that our bodies require that they cannot make themselves. Most plant-based options do not include all nine amino acids, so it can be necessary to mix foods for the best plant protein make-up. For instance, beans are high in lysine, but are low in methionine. Rice, however, is low in lysine and high in methionine. Put these two ingredients together and you have a whole food, plant-based protein that covers all your bases.

What Motivates These Diets?

These are simply definitions and do not actually place any intrinsic value on "health" or positive effects. For instance, there are plenty of vegan foods in the grocery store [which are still super-processed](#). These can be great options for those who have goals reflecting personal beliefs about subjects like the environment and the treatment of animals, but they are not in and of themselves "healthy" or a positive choice.

There are still plenty of unhealthy choices that a person can make with a plant-based diet, which is why it's so important to focus primarily on what your client wishes to achieve. Whereas ISSA doesn't promote one dietary plan over another, our intent is to simply inform in a manner that will help you help your clients to accomplish their goals and objectives.

The Real Target

The true enemy of health tends to be processed foods. This isn't to say they should or shouldn't be included, it's just to say that switching between [a protein powder](#) that includes animal products versus one that doesn't include animal products isn't going to change a whole lot—you're still consuming a processed food. Again, not necessarily good or bad, but this will still largely achieve the same objective.

The real difference that comes to bear is between getting protein from chicken versus protein from beans and nuts. The more important element in terms of overall health and wellness has less to do with animal or non-animal, and far more to do with the degree to which it's processed. Always avoid processed foods as much as you are able.

Some Health Benefits of Plant-Based Nutrition

According to the Cleveland Clinic, following a whole food, plant-based diet can result in lower rates of ⁽¹⁾:

- Heart disease
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance
- Obesity
- Colon and breast cancers

The National Institutes of Health has also found that the intervention group tested with a plant-based diet saw many long-term benefits in terms of lower cardiovascular disease risk, better cholesterol counts, and more. These are some pretty great positives ⁽²⁾. Who wouldn't want to reduce their low-density lipoprotein, or LDL, cholesterol—or reduce risk of cardiovascular disease? But these aren't the only reasons for selecting such a diet. Furthermore, this isn't to say that eating animal products will kill you—merely that research points in the direction that limiting animal products may have a positive effect. But that doesn't mean you have to go to a 100% low-fat vegan diet to see a benefit.

Going Beyond Health and Wellness

There are other prospective reasons to turn to a plant-based diet as well. Whereas some people use plant-based diets as a way to reduce the suffering of animal populations, it also turns out that there are environmental implications here as well.

For instance, one of the single largest contributors to climate change is methane from large herds of cattle, chicken farms, and the rest. “But wait,” some people rebut, “we’ve always had these animals, so why is it an issue now?” The reason is because human cultivation of meat products has far outpaced the natural environment.

If, for instance, cattle ranchers were to stop artificially maintaining populations of their cattle, many would likely die from overpopulation. It’s only through feeds and industrial agriculture that these animal populations exist—which is also leading to their greater-than-nature impact on the planet.

This isn’t to say that every person needs to stop eating meat, rather it’s simply a factor to consider.

An “All-or-Nothing” Mentality is Self-Defeating

One of the most common barriers that people place in their own way is to have an “all-or-nothing” mentality. It’s very common to run into.

Another phrase for this is “making the perfect the enemy of the good.” In other words, you don’t have to go 100% plant-based to see benefits. In fact, you can simply replace meat in one meal a day to see some benefits.

If your client is interested in trying out a whole food, plant-based diet, it’s best to start simple, even if it’s just one meal per week they trade out. Everyone starts somewhere. A humble 5% plant-based diet can quickly become 10% of their diet, then 25%, and eventually 50%. If they’re the kind of person whose goal is to completely eliminate animal products, it can be tough to go “cold turkey.”

Ready to expand your nutrition knowledge and help even more clients? Specializing as a nutritionist gives you the ability to offer more services to your clients and help them achieve the best results possible.

References

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Plant-Based Protein: An Abundance of Options



Many people get their daily supply of protein through varying forms of meat and other animal products: chicken, steak, fish, eggs, and dairy. However, vegans, vegetarians, or anyone who chooses to limit the amount of meat or other animal products they eat, must look to plants for their protein sources. If you or your clients follow a plant-based diet or are even looking for variety in a diet that includes animal products, it's helpful to know there are plenty of protein options beyond the go-to animal sources.

Plant-Based Protein Sources

A large variety of plants provide protein, and not just in tiny amounts. From grains to leafy greens, you have options that pack a punch and can help keep your clients' diets in top form.

Nuts, seeds, and legumes are excellent sources of plant-based protein and serves as ingredients in an array of plant-based eating options. Almonds make a great snack on their own, added to a salad, or as almond butter. Chia seeds can be sprinkled on just about anything: salads, smoothies, oatmeal, etc. Beans, when combined with rice, form a complete protein. Chickpeas are great when tossed with spices and eaten whole, turned into hummus, or when added to soups or curries. Lentils make a great ingredient in both soups and salads.

Vegetables are no slouch either. Spinach, sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, and asparagus are easy options for sneaking in an extra source of protein without the extra calories. These foods also bring with them a variety of vitamins and other nutrients to create a well-rounded, healthy diet.

Soybeans are a complete protein, containing all nine essential amino acids. Common soybean products include edamame, tofu, and tempeh.

- Edamame, which are immature soybeans, are commonly boiled or steamed before eaten. They're a popular addition to salads and soups.
- Tofu, made from the bean curds, is often the first meat substitute that comes to mind.
- Tempeh is cooked, fermented soybeans formed into a patty. It is rich in protein, fiber, and vitamins.

Seitan, also known as wheat protein, does not contain soy. It is high in protein and low in calories, making it a popular meat substitute. However, it does contain gluten, which causes some people to steer away from it. Most people buy seitan at a grocery store rather than making it themselves, so caution your clients that it can be highly processed and contain high levels of sodium.

Nutritional yeast, a deactivated yeast, functions as a non-dairy cheese substitute. Your clients can mix nutritional yeast into mashed potatoes, use it to make a vegan cheese sauce, sprinkle it on popcorn, and more. Fortified nutritional yeast also packs in extra nutrients such as zinc, magnesium, and B vitamins.

Plant-Based Protein Powders

Protein powder is a popular way to supplement the diet, especially for active individuals such as your clients. If your client opts for plant-based protein powders, there are several options out there to help them meet their needs.

PEA PROTEIN POWDER

Pea protein, which is gluten-free and dairy-free, is becoming increasingly popular plant-based protein. Plus, it does not contain many of the other common food allergens such as fish, shellfish, peanuts, eggs, or soy. Pea protein contains high levels of L-arginine, an amino acid that helps build muscle. The powder, made by grinding the peas into a powder and then removing the starch and fiber, is commonly added to smoothies and shakes.

HEMP PROTEIN POWDER

Hemp protein, made from ground hemp seeds, contains all nine essential amino acids. As a complete protein option, it is a great source of plant-based protein. Hemp protein is one of the less processed plant-based protein powders, making it more desirable for some people. Additionally, hemp protein is a high-fiber option, generally containing 8 grams of fiber per serving.

RICE-BASED PROTEIN POWDER

While not as popular as pea or hemp protein, rice protein is another plant-based protein option. Rice protein comes from brown rice treated with certain enzymes that separate the protein from the carbohydrates. It doesn't contain all of the essential amino acids as it is too low in lysine, so other proteins are often added, such as chia seeds or quinoa.

While it takes a very heavy protein intake to be “too much,” deficiencies in protein are also very rare, even for those passing on animal products. However, for your clients burning through the extra energy at the gym, maintaining a healthy diet with beneficial amounts of protein can take some planning. Help them make the most of their food choices with these options for plant-based protein. A diet rich in variety and nutrients can help support long-term goals and success.

Do you believe diet is a key factor in helping clients accomplish their long-term health and fitness goals? Check out the [ISSA's nutrition course](#) online so you can help clients achieve their best self.

Is Plant-Based Dairy a Healthy Alternative?



As health professionals, we teach our clients that the foundation of good health is to eat [a balanced diet](#). This typically includes choosing natural forms of protein, carbs, and fat. It also involves eating fruits and vegetables of all shapes, sizes, and colors.

But what do you do if a client wants to replace their dairy foods with “dairy” that comes from plants? First, let’s look at what types of products we are talking about.

Plant-Based Dairy Options

Plant-based dairy products are just as their name implies. They are foods that we might typically find made with dairy milk—milk that comes from cows or other animals such as sheep and goats—but they’re made with plants instead.

Some plant-based dairy items you may find on supermarket shelves include:

- Soy milk
- Coconut milk
- Rice milk
- Nut milk (such as cashew milk or almond milk)
- Hemp milk
- Dairy-free ice cream
- Dairy-free yogurt
- Vegan sour cream
- Vegan cheese

The list of milk substitutes and vegan dairy products available for purchase grows by the day as food manufacturers seek to offer customers more dairy alternatives. When might these be good options for your clients to consider?

Clients Who Might Benefit from Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives

Your clients may be interested in replacing dairy milk with a plant-based milk because they wish to follow a vegan diet. Research has found that there are many [benefits associated with removing animal products from your diet](#). For instance, the protein that comes from animal meat is generally higher in saturated fat. By eliminating it then, you also lower your risk of diseases connected to animal fats. This includes diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease.

Some clients choose a vegan diet because they disagree with how animals are treated when raised for food. To protest this, they remove animal food products from their diet completely. In cases such as this, plant-based dairy makes it possible to include this category of food without violating their beliefs.

Another reason a client might want to replace cow's milk with a milk sourced from plants is that they are lactose intolerant. This condition exists when the body cannot fully digest the lactose, or sugar, that is in cow's milk. And it is a common issue.

According to the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#), roughly two in three adults aren't able to fully digest lactose. These rates are even higher for people of certain descents. So, if you have clients who are East Asian, West African, Arab, Jewish, Greek, or Italian, this may be a bigger issue for them.

When lactose intolerant people consume products that contain this sugar, they experience a variety of uncomfortable symptoms. Among them are nausea, diarrhea, bloating, gas, and cramps. Finding a lactose-free alternative enables them to keep dairy in their diet without causing their body distress.

Another reason a client might want to switch to dairy alternatives is that they're allergic or sensitive to cow's milk. [The Mayo Clinic reports](#) that this is one of the most common food allergies for children. Though milk from cows is generally the cause, other dairy animal products may create the same effect. This includes dairy made from sheep and goats.

The Mayo Clinic adds that it is the casein and whey in cow's milk that typically causes these dairy allergies and sensitivities. In some cases, people are allergic or sensitive to only one of these proteins. Other times, they react to both.

If it is a sensitivity, removing these proteins can reduce their troubles with cramping, gas, and diarrhea. If it is an allergy, replacing cow's milk with plant-based alternatives may save their life by preventing an anaphylaxis response.

But Are Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives Healthy?

[The American Society for Nutrition](#) set out to answer this question. To do it, they compared a number of milk alternatives to one cup of full-fat cow's milk. This included soy milk, almond milk, pea protein, coconut milk, and several others.

Here are some of their most notable findings. We've also included what these may mean for your clients when it comes to their individual health and wellness.

CALORIES

Many milk alternatives (almond milk, coconut milk, rice milk, etc.) contain fewer calories than cow's milk. That makes these options good for clients who are trying to reduce their calorie intake. Oat milk was the only exception as it contained more. So, this alternative may make more sense for clients who need to add more calories to their diet.

FAT

Most dairy-free milks contain anywhere from 25 to 63 percent less fat than cow's milk. Hemp was the only one that fell outside these guidelines. So, if you're trying to find ways for clients to reduce the amount of fat they consume, substituting cow's milk with a plant-based milk can help achieve this goal.

SUGAR

A lot of milk alternatives contain less sugar than cow's milk. While all clients should be watching their sugar intake, this is even more critical for those diagnosed with diabetes. Consuming products higher in sugar can cause their blood sugar to spike, which [Medical News Today](#) shares can lead to shortness of breath, rapid heart rate, or even a coma.

PROTEIN

Typically, dairy-free alternatives are lower in protein than milk that comes from cows. If clients wish to incorporate one of these options, additional protein may need to be added in their diet to ensure that they are getting enough of this macronutrient. The only exceptions were soybean, pea protein, and flaxseed milk.

SODIUM

Coconut milk has the lowest amount of sodium. That makes this option more beneficial for clients who need to limit their intake. This would include those who struggle with high blood pressure, hypertension, or other cardiac issues.

MINERALS

Certain minerals are more prevalent in some dairy alternatives than in others. For instance, pea protein milk is higher in potassium and calcium. If your client is deficient in one of these nutrients, switching to this milk can help them increase their intake.

Creating a Healthy Diet with Plant-Based Foods

Whether your client wants to consume plant-based dairy products due to their reaction to cow's milk or because they wish to protest the inhumane treatment of animals, there are a few things you can do as their trainer and coach to help them create a diet based on health.

For instance, if you find that they're not eating enough protein, you could suggest that they incorporate more plant-based protein options in their diet. This might include eating more nuts, increasing their intake of soy, or supplementing with a plant-based protein powder.

It's also important to stress that, even though many dairy alternatives are lower in sugar, this doesn't mean they get to consume more of them. One example of this is ice cream. While a bowl of this sweet treat now and then is okay, eating ice cream every single day will make it harder for them to meet their health and fitness goals.

At the same time, you also want to continue to provide [tips to improve other bad eating habits](#) they may have. Reinforce how eating slower helps the stomach better recognize when it is full, for example. Or talk about how eating at the kitchen table versus the couch keeps them from overeating because they will be less distracted.

It's also important to remember that each client is unique. So, one person may tolerate dairy milk alternatives better than another. To help you tailor your diet recommendations even more, the ISSA offers a [DNA-Based Fitness Coach Certification](#). This course teaches you how to create an effective health and fitness program for clients based on their genetics. Enroll today and learn how to give your clients a plan suited uniquely to them!

Can You Build Muscle on a Plant-Based Diet?



As plant-based lifestyles become more popular, so does the need to fully understand what it takes to support health and fitness goals while going plant-based. For general fitness goals, not much may need to change. However, building lean muscle on a plant-based diet could be a different story. Some think following a plant-based diet plan and gaining muscle mass do not go hand in hand, that achieving enough grams of protein to allow for growth won't occur. Is it true?

Protein alone is not the only contributing factor in promoting muscle. A client needs to follow a comprehensive workout program that includes strength training. The strength training program should apply all of the laws of training, including the [overload principle](#). Creating a well-structured workout program that emphasizes [hypertrophy](#) is a significant contributing factor to your client's results.

And it's your job as their personal trainer to craft a plan that accounts for their nutritional lifestyle, effective training programs, and their fitness goals. Consider the following factors to determine if building muscle mass without the use of animal protein sources is possible for your client.

The Importance of Limiting Factors

[Limiting factors](#) are the areas in life that consistently reduce your potential, your capability for peak performance, fat loss, and muscle gain. You can find these in your behaviors, your habits, and the choices you make when your willpower is low. Addressing limiting factors is essential for all clients. It is especially important for those whose nutrition program requires more attention to detail than the average individual.

Addressing the limiting factors such as habits that damage the quality of their [sleep](#) can play a significant role in the progress your client makes. It may be easy to blame the lack of animal protein in the client's diet. However, without addressing the limiting factors that each person has, you cannot isolate the problem to be a deficiency in protein.

Another limiting factor to consider is the amount of resistance training a client performs on a moderate-protein diet. It is unlikely that a client who is consuming moderate amounts of protein can adequately recover with a high-frequency program. Ensure your client understands how much training they will need for muscle growth while considering the reality of their lifestyle. Stressing the need for your client to recover from the intensity of the exercise performed is important for all clients.

How Much Protein?

With a periodized program in place and limiting factors addressed, you can now discuss protein. Before deciding if muscle growth is possible for the client, [first figure out how much protein to consume](#) for growth to occur. Knowledge is power, and if you understand the amount of protein your client needs to consume, you can determine if building muscle on a plant-based diet is possible for this individual.

As an example, suppose you have a 200-pound client with a body fat level of 15% has a fat-free mass of 170 pounds. Following the recommendation of 1 gram of protein per pound of lean mass, this individual needs to consume 170 grams of protein per day. Consuming this much protein on a plant-based diet could be tough for some individuals, but it is certainly possible with proper food pairing and the option to add high-quality vegan protein supplements if needed.

Branch Chain Amino Acids (BCAAs)

The amount of protein is not the only consideration for a muscle-building nutrition program. Aim of a diet rich in BCAAs. BCAAs consist of three essential amino acids:

- Leucine
- Isoleucine
- Valine

They play an important role in building muscle as they increase protein synthesis. Increased protein synthesis speeds up the rate of repair from the muscle damage created during our workouts.

Animal-based proteins are abundant in these amino acids. Achieving adequate levels on a plant-based diet may require some creativity. Each food will have higher or lower levels in each of these amino acids. Rarely is a plant-based food found to be rich in all three BCAAs. If needed, vegetarian protein supplements can help by supplying enough BCAAs.

Attention to Detail

The choice of foods in your meal plan matters. As a fitness professional, you must aim to create a well-balanced program allowing for optimal nutrient absorption and food digestibility. Without considering this, a plant-based nutrition program can cause a lack of energy, strength, and results.

Consuming not only the correct amounts of macronutrients but also micronutrients becomes a more tedious process. However, taking the time to be certain these nutrients are high enough is a worthwhile process. Not only for ensuring your client has the greatest chance at success, but also to strengthen your relationship. The time you take is affirming to them that you have their best interests in mind.

Your meal plans should ensure the client is consuming adequate levels of leafy greens and other colorful vegetables. The nutrients found in these foods will play a surprising role in your clients' ability to build muscle.

Carbohydrates Matter

A well-balanced nutrition program for a client following a plant-based diet includes the use of carbohydrates. This may not be a concern for many plant-based individuals, as the tendency is to have excessive carbohydrates. However, with many clients choosing to follow a low-carbohydrate diet, it's best to be aware. The

consumption of adequate carbohydrates is important because it will further increase protein synthesis. Quality carbohydrates give the client struggling to achieve enough protein an opportunity to make better use of the protein they consume.

Determining Deficiencies

While consuming enough protein is crucial to developing muscle, it may not be the only deficiency inhibiting muscle growth. If muscle growth is the priority, be sure your client is consuming at or slightly above their caloric needs. A client in a [caloric deficit](#) will have a more challenging time increasing strength and size. They may make small gains initially, but beyond this, they'll need to consume enough calories and protein.

Without proper planning, a plant-based meal plan may cause B12, iron, vitamin D, zinc, or calcium deficiency. The elimination of animal-based foods minimizes the options available for these micronutrients. Many forget that these key micronutrients have a role not only in health but also in muscle growth. Deficiency in vitamin D, for example, may lead to lower levels of testosterone, which can impact muscle growth.

A client may find that food alone will not help them reach protein, macronutrient, and micronutrient needs. Here, the use of high-quality nutritional supplements may be an option to consider. If diet alone is not enough, quality supplements can help reach these desired levels, ensuring they have the ingredients for growth.

Getting Educated to Support Your Clients

So, can you help clients who want to build muscle while adhering to a plant-based diet? Yes, with a full commitment by the client and yourself. As is the case with any client. A plant-based lifestyle may require more time reviewing nutritional needs if you or your client are new to the lifestyle, but building muscle is still possible.

Learn more about the science behind fitness with the [ISSA's Personal Trainer Certification](#). You'll gain the in-depth knowledge it takes to understand the body's muscle and skeletal structure and how they respond to exercise and movements. Provide current or future clients with customized training programs based on their individual health and fitness goals. Everything you need to learn is online and you can work through it at your own pace.

What Should I Charge for Nutrition Coaching?



A nutrition coach, also known as a health coach or wellness coach, is a trained professional who works with clients to improve their health through dietary changes. There are several things these coaches can do for their clients:

- Educate them about nutrition and food and how these relate to health and fitness
- Provide individualized meal plans and tips for shopping and preparing healthy foods
- Help set and achieve health and wellness goals
- Interpret and simplify confusing health and nutrition information
- Motivate them to make important, lasting changes for better health

These are valuable services that can be life-changing. A good coach uses a client's strengths, evaluates their challenges, and provides individualized strategies and plans for making real, positive changes. So, what is that worth to clients?

Deciding what to charge your nutrition coaching clients can be difficult. Do some research, find out what competitors charge, consider the value you provide, and avoid underselling yourself.

Not totally sure nutrition coaching is the job for you? [Here's a rundown of what these coaches actually do to help you decide.](#)

What Do Nutrition Coaches Earn?

If you're just considering getting into this career, it's important to understand the current state of the industry. Health and nutrition careers are growing rapidly throughout the U.S. as more people take an interest in making lifestyle changes ⁽¹⁾.

Salaries, though, can vary quite a lot by location and based on other factors: credentials and education, experience, and services offered. Ziprecruiter.com reports that health coaches earn an average of \$46,352 per year, while Payscale.com reports an average hourly salary of \$24.57 ^(2, 3).

Averages are useful, but they represent a wide range of actual salaries. To really nail down an appropriate price for your services, keep these figures in mind but also consider all the individual factors.

Whatever You Do, Avoid This One Big Mistake

What is the [biggest mistake new coaches make?](#) They undercharge. It is difficult for most people to charge what they are really worth. You're not alone if you struggle to do this. Comparisons to competitors is so important in deciding your worth to clients.

Use local coach fees as a baseline, but don't be afraid to charge more if you think you have more to offer: better credentials, nice services or a greater variety of services, a more hands-on approach, or more years of experience.

Even if you're new to the industry, avoid the instinct to undercharge. You earned your credentials; you are knowledgeable; and you provide a valuable service. A free initial evaluation is reasonable and can help get new clients in the door, but then charge a fair price for services going forward.

Price out Your Expenses

Everything else here is important to consider, but you absolutely must earn enough to make a living, right? So, the first thing you should do when pricing your services is consider what you actually need to earn. List all your expenses:

- Advertising and marketing costs
- Rental space in a gym or your own facility
- Any software you use to work with clients
- Educational materials

With all your expenses lined up, ask yourself how much you want to make. Do some math to figure out what you need to charge clients and how many clients you need to earn that salary.

What Should I Charge Compared to Competitors?

Doing your research is truly the key to finding the right rate for your health coaching services. Compare your offerings to competitors and find a balance between what you offer and what clients will pay. Consider competitors, your credentials, your target market and location, and services you'll offer.

DO YOUR RESEARCH ON HEALTH COACH COMPETITORS

Sit down at your computer and search for nutrition coaches as if you were a prospective client. Search for the websites of individual coaches, search through social media, and look at local gyms and spas that hire nutrition professionals.

If their sites don't list their fees, email or call to find out. Ask questions, but don't feel like you have to pretend to be a client. You can be honest. Other coaches will most likely be happy to give you a few minutes to discuss how they price services.

As you do this research, keep in mind the distinction between coaches and dietitians/nutritionists. The latter are generally more credentialed professionals. They probably have a four-year degree and some type of licensing. Their fees will be higher than yours, so the comparison isn't valid.

RESEARCH YOUR MARKET TOO

By researching other coaches in your area, you will start to get a better sense of the target market. Who are those other coaches targeting? Local gyms can also be a source of information about the kinds of people

interested in your services. Are they busy working moms? Seniors? Young professionals? The people you target will partly determine what you can charge.

COMPARE YOUR CREDENTIALS AND OFFERINGS TO COMPETITORS

Use the average fees you see nutrition coaches charging in your area as a baseline for your own service fees. Scale that number up or down based on what you have to offer compared to those competitors. If you have more credentials, charge more per coaching session. If you have additional services or experience in related jobs, charge more. If you are new and have no experience with a health coaching business yet, charge less, but not too little.

DO YOU OFFER EXTRA SERVICES?

If all you offer is basic nutritional coaching, service pricing will be simple. But if you offer other coaching services, you will have to determine if you want to charge for those separately or include everything in one package. If you can show clients that your basic fee includes more than what the competitor offers, you can charge more.

Working for a Company vs. Starting a Coaching Business

Setting your prices for consulting as a nutrition coach applies to freelancing or starting your own business. While this is the route many coaches take, you can find work as an employee. Some of the benefits of this option include job stability and benefits. On the downside, you don't get to set your rates. It's up to the company to do so. Employers that hire nutrition coaches include:

- Weight loss companies
- College and university athletic departments and health centers
- Spas, gyms, and wellness centers
- Large companies of any type that have employee wellness programs
- Community and public health organizations

Offering and Pricing Coaching Packages

A smart way to offer services is to bundle sessions into an extended coaching package. You should have a set rate for individual, hour-long sessions as well as package deals, which will naturally cost less per session. For example:

- \$100 per hour for one session
- \$540 (\$90 per hour) for a package of six sessions
- \$960 (\$80 per hour) for a package of 12 sessions

You will earn less per hour with a bundle, but it's usually worth it. When a client pays for a month or more of services, you have a set source of income for that period of time. Hour-by-hour clients may drop out at any time, along with your salary. Another way to bundle, if you're also a personal trainer, is to offer a discount for nutrition coaching and training together.

Pricing for Online Nutrition Services

Many coaches offer online services, either in addition to in-person coaching or as the focus of their business. There are some benefits to working online, including low operating costs and a bigger reach. But pricing can be a little complicated as your market expands.

Working as an online coach, it's a good idea to focus your target market since location is not a limitation. For instance, maybe you will target new moms or clients looking to lose weight. When you have a niche, pricing will be easier because you will be able to better determine what that ideal client is willing to pay. In general, fees for online coaching are less than for in-person services, as in the same with online personal training vs in-person.

Starting an online coaching business isn't as easy as it sounds. There are a lot of pitfalls. We can help you avoid them and [start a thriving online nutrition consulting business](#).

Want to Charge More? Get Certified

If you were seeking out services from a fitness or health professional, or any type of professional, would you pay the same price for a certified as a non-certified coach? Of course you wouldn't. Certification and other credentials prove that an individual has been educated and trained to provide a particular service. People will pay more for that assurance.

Take your expertise, training, and success up another level with [ISSA's Elite Trainer program](#)! You'll make more money by adding credentials that lead to higher hourly rates; you'll gain proficiency in new areas of fitness; and you'll be among the top in the fitness industry!

As an Elite Trainer you get:

- Personal Trainer Certification - Self-Guided Study Program
- Nutritionist Specialization
- Any advanced specialization, such as DNA-Based Fitness Coach

References

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