

by A. Elizabeth Sloan

## New Motivation to Move Fuels Sports Nutrition Opportunities

Faced with a new set of health and lifestyle issues driven by COVID-19, consumers are increasingly opting for a more holistic, active lifestyle that uses exercise to help manage their health and well-being. Not surprisingly, they are looking for a new generation of more aggressive and often multifunctional sports nutrition, weight loss, and energizing foods/drinks to support their efforts.

### Undoing the Damage

Nearly a year of lockdowns, social distancing, and anxiety has taken its toll: Four in 10 Gen Z adults aged 18–24, one-third of millennials/Gen Xers, and just over one-quarter of boomers gained weight since the pandemic, according to the Natural Marketing Institute. HealthFocus' 2020 *Now and Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic* cites immunity, stress, anxiety, lack of energy/tiredness, sleeplessness, heart disease, and overweight among Americans' top 10 health concerns.

Many consumers have turned to exercise to help prevent and/or treat health conditions, including weight, anxiety/stress, fatigue, heart, diabetes, and memory/cognition, per the Hartman Group's *Health + Wellness 2019*. Meanwhile, the American College of Sports Medicine's (ACSM) 2021 *Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends* notes that "exercise as medicine" ranks eighth among the top U.S. fitness trends for 2021. According to Mintel's 2020 *Exercise Trends—U.S.*, those living a holistic, active lifestyle (exercise three to five days per week) already represent 37% of the U.S. adult population.

### Fueling Fitness 2021

Nearly six in 10 consumers say they are committed to exercising more in 2021, says ADM's 2020 *OutsideVoice* research. Half of gym/health club users are concerned about immunity; four in 10 are exercising to improve their mood, per the 2020 *COVID Era Fitness Consumer* report from fitness group IHRSA.

All that exercise needs fuel: One-third (36%) of consumers always/usually had a food/beverage before exercising, 26% during, and 48% after in 2019, reports HealthFocus. With online training and outside activity among the top fitness trends for 2021, per ACSM, expect a new generation of at-home sports foods and beverages, each offering support for specific health and fitness objectives.

### Energy

- Dole's *Boasted Blends* frozen smoothie mixes are available in *Energize* with a boost of matcha green tea and *Protein* with whey and almond butter.
- *Coca-Cola With Coffee* with 69 mg of caffeine per can offers a more traditional energy drink for active adults.
- Over four in 10 millennials/Gen Z adults are interested in nootropics, ashwagandha, and maca for energy/focus, according to the Hartman Group's 2020 *Functional Food & Beverage and Supplements*.

### Immunity

- *Propel Immune Support* electrolyte water for active lifestyles provides 100% of the Daily Value for vitamin C; 30% for zinc.
- Millennials and Gen Z look toward elderberry and medicinal mushrooms for immunity, per the Hartman Group's functional food and beverage report.

### Strength

- Strength is now the third most important reason to exercise, just behind health and weight, according to HealthFocus. Strength/muscle health ranks fifth among benefits consumers most want to get from foods, per the International Food Information Council's 2020 *Food & Health Survey*.
- *Ensure Active Heart Health* nutrition shakes and *Splenda Diabetes Care* protein shakes are well positioned for the seven in 10

boomers and six in 10 consumers with pre-existing conditions who are committed to being more active this year, per IHRSA.

### Mobility

- Exercising for greater mobility is among the top 20 U.S. fitness trends. The ability to continue normal activities with age is another priority health concern, per HealthFocus.
- Exercise intensity is moderate for most active adults: 107 million are exercise walkers, per the National Sporting Goods Association.

### Weight Loss

- Marketdata Enterprises projects frozen meals will again lead sales growth in the \$71 billion U.S. weight loss sector.
- Jenny Craig's new *Rapid Results Max* program is based on intermittent fasting and includes a *ReCharge Bar* to increase fat burn.
- Adding a brain health claim to a weight loss meal replacement drink would motivate 74% of consumers to purchase the product, per Mintel's 2020 *Functional Beverages—U.S.*

### Multiple Benefits

- It is time to offer combination products that tout other benefits consumers associate with protein. Over half link protein to physical energy, four in 10 to brain nourishment, and one-quarter to satiety, per HealthFocus.
- Staying hydrated is consumers' top self-care behavior, per an IRI survey. *Voss + Aquamine* extra-hydrating water for active adults contains 74 minerals/electrolytes.
- Probiotics and postbiotics are among the ingredients increasingly associated with enhanced sports performance. Molson Coors recently introduced its *Huzzah Probiotic Seltzer*. FT



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