

The Sports Dietitian's Isa-Journey

By Dani Catania, B Nutr Diet, Sports Dietitian – October 2013

The first time I had ever heard of Isagenix was whilst working with Jana Pittman, 2-time World Champion 400m hurdler. I was a consultant sports dietitian at the Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) and the only reasons that I had ever looked into the products were to ensure their safety and to fit the shakes and bars into meal plans. The IsaLean shake was the first product I looked at – it was like love at first sight! Here was a shake that went beyond protein and a few vitamins – it had a probiotic! And prebiotic fibre! And digestive enzymes! Oh, and even a little carbohydrate! I had been working with other products made by Musashi™, Body Science, Aussie Bodies and Sustagen Sport® to name a few. And none of their products came close to this. So we built it into Jana's meal plans and that was that.

A few months later, Jana connects me with Sharron Walsh, Isagenix General Manager, ANZ. I was impressed by the culture of the company and quality of the shakes and the bars, but was very unfamiliar with the adaptogens (herbs and botanical ingredients) that were also found in the products. Sharron was quick to connect me with the US-based science and development team and point me in the direction of evidence-based, fully-referenced resources. And it was based on a combination of gut instinct and a fascination for holistic nutrition that I decided to align myself with the company and put my reputation against theirs in September 2012.

But I was still on my dietitian high-horse. I was sent a sample of every product to try and use for myself. And I tasted a few things. But how could a cardboard box full of product be any better than my knowledge as a dietitian. Surely not I thought! And life was busy. I was getting married in January and life was hectic.

In March, I was invited to speak at the Isagenix National Celebration, the Isa-version of a conference. I was presenting alongside Jana Pittman, Anna Cleaver and Neil Berry – 3 of the most inspiring athletes that I have ever worked with and known. But I had my dietitian ego in tow and sat in the back of the first session with my laptop open furiously working on other projects because I was busy and important! Jana was presenting that first session on motivation and through half-listening ears, I thought to myself "Dani, you could actually learn something from this". And so I closed my laptop and opened my mind to learning about what this company had to offer. Over that weekend, I met Jim and Kathy Coover in the dressing room, their son Erik Coover on the dance floor and Jen and Jono Patch, who have become some of my closest and dearest friends to date. And I spoke to about half of the 1500 associates who all had health transformation stories. And I'd been so arrogantly ignorant to using the products properly that I didn't have a health story to share. So I returned home later that Sunday night and made the decision to do a 30-day program to the letter.

Within two weeks, my body was changing for the better. Years of unresolved stomach bloating, cramping, fluctuating bowels and reflux were no longer an issue. I felt like I could think more clearly than I ever remember and bounced out of bed at 4.45am ready to start work at 6am! Within 30 days, I had released 5kgs from my 61kg frame and saw my abs for the first time! My joint pain was decreasing and I felt amazing. So I buried myself in the scientific literature and studied every ingredient and why this system resolved a plethora of health complaints in 30 days that I had been struggling with for most of adulthood. You could say the rest is history. I have been using the Isagenix system now for seven months and I have no intention of ever stopping.

I have come to understand that the Isagenix system of health works on many levels.

- 1) It combines the best of many parallel nutrition worlds: it features elements of the Western nutrition world, Chinese medicine, naturopathy and Ayurvedic medicine to bring about a state of balance in overwhelmed bodies.
- 2) It is simple, semi-structured and straightforward – you just follow the guide but also provides enough flexibility to fit your lifestyle and current habits.
- 3) It incorporates the practice of cleansing, which could also be identified as a nutritionally-supported intermittent fast, consisting of 1-2 consecutive days (with no more than 6 cleanse days in the 30-day period) supported in between with the most nutritionally-dense shake on the market. There is evidence emerging in the scientific literature suggesting that intermittent fasting provides a gamut of health benefits, including appetite control, improved insulin and leptin sensitivity, improved mood and quality of life, cellular maintenance (autophagy) and weight loss. *See references below.*
- 4) It provides adaptogens (herbs and botanical ingredients) in a very palatable form (which means no green bark slushies or unappetizing concoctions!) which also provide extensive health benefits, particularly on reducing the effect that stress has on the body, improving sleep, mood, clarity of mind, mental and physical performance, hormonal balance, digestive health... the list goes on. *See references below.*
- 5) We live in a busy, stressed-out, demanding and time-poor world and most of us are in need of a convenient, quick and healthy solution. The shakes and the bars are designed for precisely that – it is not another “shake” diet – the shakes are simply the vehicle to pack a truckload of nutrients into a calorie-balanced tasty thick shake. The difference with the IsaLean shake is that it provides nutrition for *ultimate health* – not just enough to cover RDIs. And all products are formulated with all-natural ingredients – there are no artificial colours, flavours or sweeteners.
- 6) It removes the reliance on health professionals, instead providing a system of health that is sustainable through peer-group support, and every person becomes their own preventative health coach and a health coach (and cheerleader) for any friend that decides to take control of their health.
- 7) The company’s founders Jim & Kathy Coover, together with John Anderson believe that every person should be able to afford the best nutrition and have ultimate health. This company *actually cares* about people – their health and the opportunity to get their products for free, or even create an additional income to restore the hope in people’s lives. This company is scientifically responsible and has a no-compromise attitude to every product that they produce. This system of health *actually works*.

If you are a dietitian or health professional reading this, I implore you to take the time to do your homework. I suggest visiting www.isagenixhealth.net for evidence-based, referenced articles and please see the attached reference list for the evidence that got me across the line. I have since realised that I was a frustrated dietitian who was trying to improve my clients quality of life and resolve their dietary issues with what I had been taught should work. But it wasn’t working and I felt more and more ineffective every year,

to the point where I was questioning my career path every year (which usually happened between October and January when I was most exhausted, overworked and fed-up). I have worked as a dietitian for the last 7 years and have worked 50-70hrs/week to still be a slave to the bills, no recognition, no leave benefits as a consultant sports dietitian and no life because I could never afford to take time off. In April this year, I was forced to decide whether I continued to consult to the VIS or explore the new adventure that was Isagenix. I had seen so many improvements in my own personal health and in the friends and family that were using the products that I took a leap of faith to run with this amazing company. And I have no regrets.

Suggested reading/reference list:

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