

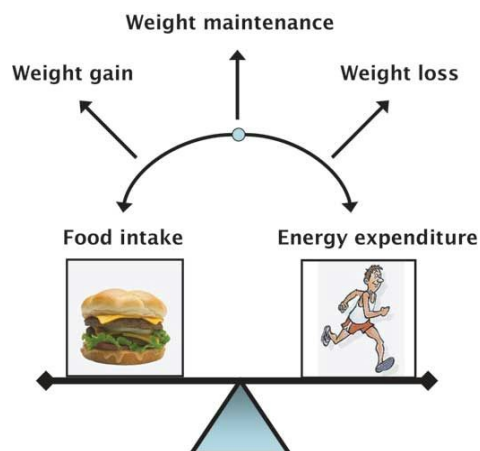
Setting Your Calories and Activity Levels

To burn body fat, we must prompt your body to tap into its stored energy reserves. Accomplishing this will require a change in your intake and/or output of calories (energy expenditure).

Burning a pound of fat per week requires an average deficit of ~500 calories per day. This deficit can come from burning an extra 500 calories per day while keeping your caloric intake the same, or removing 500 calories from your intake while holding your activity levels constant, or manipulating both variables.

Maintenance Calories

Estimating your maintenance calorie level is the first part of the nutrition puzzle. Maintenance calorie level simply means the amount of food required to maintain your current body weight at your given level of activity.



In practical terms, any change of body weight is dictated by your calorie balance. If you eat more calories than you burn, you gain weight. If you eat less than you burn, you lose weight. (Keep in mind, body weight does fluctuate based on water balance, food in the gut, and other factors).

Calculating your calorie needs can be a bit confusing, however there are a few useful methods that help estimate it. We have a handy calorie calculator spreadsheet to accompany this guide.

Another quick method to find your maintenance caloric needs is multiplying your bodyweight by a factor of 13-15 depending on your activity level. This will estimate how many calories you burn in one day. It may not be entirely accurate, but it should give you a good approximation.

Activity Level	Calorie Factor	Daily Maintenance at 150lbs Body Weight
Low - Primarily Sedentary	13	1,950
Moderate - Some Activity	14	2,100
High - Very active	15+	2,250+

For example, if you weigh 150lbs and you have average activity levels, multiplying your bodyweight by 14 will estimate your maintenance calories at 2,100. If you are sedentary, that factor would go down to 13 and your maintenance calories closer to 1,950. And, if you are very active, 15+ may be a good number with calories at 2,250+. Generally it's best to under-estimate your activity level.

Remember, these are rough estimates to help you establish a starting point. It's very important to track your progress and make adjustments based upon how you feel and how your body changes.

Creating a Deficit

There are 2 ways to create a calorie deficit and initiate fatloss:

1. Increasing your activity level, which increases your maintenance requirements.
2. Decreasing caloric intake to below-maintenance levels.

If you increase your activity level, and eat at your previous maintenance level; you will begin to lose body mass (ideally, fat). The same goes for decreasing your calorie intake by eating less, while maintaining your current activity level.

I recommend implementing both techniques, with moderation, and discovering which seems to work better for you. Generally, you want to see what little changes you can make that will have the biggest impact.

The first 3 things to examine are:

1. How active are you throughout the day? (E.g. steps per day or hours seated)
2. How frequently are you training?
3. What low-quality foods can you replace or cut out of your diet?

Improving these 3 things can produce dramatic results. Let's look at each in more detail.

How active are you?

With the convenience of modern technology, we all sit down way too much! If you are desk bound most of the day your metabolic rate takes a huge hit. Planned active intervention is usually necessary. The easiest thing to do is incorporate 3-4 x 15-minute walks throughout the day, unless you are already on your feet a lot.

Your goal should be an average of 10,000 steps per day and to minimize the time you spend sitting down. Getting a step counter to help you keep track is a great idea. You can also download a pedometer app on your phone or get a device like a Fitbit, which can be a huge help and motivator. It can also be eye opening with regards to how little we sometimes move around!



If you aren't getting 10,000 steps a day, start to plan weekly outdoors or physical activities that get you moving and provide some recreation. It will help ignite your metabolism and you'll start to feel great!

Another great way to get moving is doing 10-15 minute bursts of cleaning or organizing around your office or house. You'll get a lot of movement in along with a sense of accomplishment by knocking out some chores!

How frequently should you train?

My recommendation is to train 3-4 days per week with moderate to high intensity weight lifting. At a bare minimum, twice per week strength training.

To maximize fat loss, you must be maintaining or increasing muscle mass via strength training. If you don't stimulate your body to do so, you will lose almost as much muscle as you do fat during your weight-loss journey. This is why it is important to prioritize strength training above cardio.

We will dive deeper into training recommendations in another guide!

What low quality foods can you replace or cut out?

This has the potential to have the biggest impact on your weight loss success and overall health. The biggest reason why people gain weight and feel sluggish is due to low quality, calorically dense food selection.

Junk foods like sweet tea, fried foods, sugary baked goods, and other high fat, high sugar, processed foods are adding a HUGE amount of low quality calories to your diet. These addictive foods barely fill you up and promote more cravings!

Replacing the low quality, high calorie junk with nutrient packed foods with lower calorie points is the secret to looking, feeling, and performing your best!



Focus on making 80% of your meals composed of a variety of lean meats, vegetables, and minimally processed starchy carbohydrates, and you'll be good to go!

It's key to note the importance of getting enough food. We want to burn the fat, not starve it. Eating enough of the right foods is critical for a balance of nutrients that will allow you to thrive.

Everybody wants more energy, to feel vibrant and ready to go. The only way to do that is to get the right amount of activity and nutrients in to support it. If you are feeling sluggish and low energy while on your diet, it's important to look at your total amount of calories, protein intake, nutrient quality, and the amount of sleep you are getting at night.

Macronutrients (aka Macros)

Next up is understanding and setting your macros based on your goals, personal preference, and activity level. Use our handy calorie and macros calculator in the members zone to set everything up.

A little primer on the 3 macronutrients: Protein, Fat and Carbohydrate

Protein

Protein may be the most important macronutrient to pay attention to. It has 4 calories per gram, provides the most satiation (fullness) and is critical for maintaining and growing muscle.



Prioritize your protein intake, and make sure you are getting enough in!

We recommend a minimum protein intake of .7 grams per pound of bodyweight. You should aim to have your protein intake about 25-40% of your total calories. This varies based upon the other levels of nutrients.

Generally, women should aim for a minimum of 100 grams of protein per day, and men should get at least 150 grams. These are good starting points. Reaching the recommended intake usually requires a game plan, as most people tend to consume less protein than they should.

Dairy and animal based protein are the highest quality protein sources with regards to essential amino acid profiles, so it is best to find a way to get these in, and you can use supplements if necessary.

If you're finding it very hard to get enough protein in via whole foods, protein powders can be a great option. Whey Isolate is one of the best options, but other blends and sources can be fine too. Try not go to get more than ~30% of your protein intake from supplement powders.

Fat

Next up is Fat, and despite its controversial history, it is a very important nutrient. Fat is essential, and getting enough and the right types are critical for vital body function and performance.

Fat makes food taste better, and is an easy way to increase calories when needed. It is the most calorie dense nutrient, at 9 calories per gram. And since it is so calorically dense, we want to keep our awareness of how fatty some of our food choices are. ***Eating things like nut butters or just nuts can dramatically spike calories if you don't control portion size.***

Focusing your fat intake on monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats is a great idea and very healthy. These comes from nuts, seeds, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, and other plant based sources.

Keep in mind some Saturated Fat is also healthy and you should not completely neglect it. The small amounts found in fatty fish, eggs, and cuts of meat should provide you with what you need.

We recommend setting your Fat intake to about 20-40% of your total calorie intake.

Carbohydrate

Carbs have gotten a bad rap in the past, and not necessarily for bad reason. However, it's important to realize it is perfectly fine to eat them, under the right circumstances.

At 4 calories per gram, carbs are the what the body prefers to use as fuel for high intensity activities and day-to-day brain function. If you train hard, carbs will help you increase performance and recover faster. They also provide a host of other benefits, like improved sleep quality and stress handling.



We recommend setting your Carb intake between 20-55% depending on your activity level, body composition, and other personal factors.

For body transformation, the most practical source of carbs are starches, like potatoes and rice. Fruit is another healthy source of carbohydrates, which also provides many vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants and is also a great source of fiber.

The darkside of carbohydrates generally come from highly processed, sugary foods and drinks like soda, sweet tea, candy, and fried food. The problem with these foods, is that they generally lack fiber, contain high amounts of fat, and taste addictively delicious. It's a recipe for disaster: a calorie bomb without the healthy nutrients your body really needs.

Fiber

While technically a carbohydrate, fiber is very important for a variety of health reasons. It also helps fill you up at a much lower calorie point and is important for a healthy gut.

Getting your fiber intake right is one way to ensure you get great results. We recommend about 15g of fiber per 1,000 calories you consume. If you are hitting your vegetable and fruit intake goals, this should be easy and an afterthought.

Macro Ratios

Setting your macronutrient ratios can be very useful on how to build your meal plates and create "go to" meals. However, it can be confusing! So let's keep it simple and base it on your general body type. These recommendations are percentages of macro of total calorie intake for the day:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| ● Thin | Carbs: 55%, Protein: 25%, Fat: 20% |
| ● Medium Build | Carbs: 40%, Protein: 30%, Fat: 30% |
| ● Thick | Carbs: 25%, Protein: 35%, Fat: 40% |