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We are not doctors, nor do we possess a degree in nutrition. The advice we give is based on years of practical application, dealing with the needs of our own health and physiques as well as the needs of others. Any recommendations we may make to you regarding diet, including, supplements and herbal or nutritional treatments must be discussed between you and your doctor/s.

Muscle-Building Disclaimer

Required Legal Disclaimer: Due to recent laws from the FTC, it is required that all companies identify what a "typical" result is. The truth is that most people never do anything when it comes to trying building muscle. They might buy a million products, including this one, but never do anything with the information they have in hand. The testimonials that you saw were of people who took action, followed a healthy lifestyle, exercised, and ate a balanced nutritional diet. If you want results like them, you should do this too.

Introduction to Flexible Dieting

"Ditch your meal plan and develop a diet that combines sound nutrition with the foods you enjoy by eating when you see fit in the portions that allow you to achieve your macronutrient and caloric needs while providing sufficient micronutrients, energy and satiety. One can never forget that nutrition is a tool, not a restraint; the enjoyment of life should always come first. Psychological, sociological and emotional health should never be threatened by the attempt to increase physiological health."

Flexible Dieting: An approach where you disregard arbitrary food labels such as "junk food" and "clean food" and focus on your total caloric intake (energy balance), your daily set macronutrient targets and your micronutrient goals in order to achieve your desired body composition.

Flexible dieting is...

- A calculated technique that will allow you to ensure 100% that you have provided your body with the sufficient nutrients in order to recover and rebuild
- Not as simple as having a set meal plan and eating the same 6 foods throughout the day
- A scientific approach that allows you to strategically enjoy the foods you love without the guilt of a "cheat day" or "cheat meal"

Old School Dieting is Dead

Most bodybuilding diets are unnecessarily hard to stick with. They are exaggerated, boring, and extremely exclusive. What I mean by exclusive is this; they focus more so on what "junk foods" to avoid than they do on what nutrient dense foods to include. They also typically require some sort of unrealistic frequency that most individuals with lives outside of bodybuilding find extremely hard to cater to. Then when you have problems consuming certain meals at certain times, they make you feel as if you're making excuse or as if you're not as serious as they are about bodybuilding. If you have a slice of pizza at a birthday party, you've cheated on your diet. If you missed your protein shake immediately after your workout, you're losing your muscle. ALL BULLSHIT.

A New Look at Nutrition

Unlike the typical muscle building nutrition approaches, flexible dieting is more inclusive. This simply means that the goal is not to exclude certain foods, but to focus on including as many nutrient dense sources as possible without suffering from depression when you decide to include a slice of cake. Remember, there is no such thing as a "clean food" or a "dirty food", there are only foods that are high in nutrients and foods that are low in nutrients.

Step #1

Creating a Well-Balanced Caloric Surplus

What is a Caloric Surplus?

A calorie surplus is a state in which you eat more calories than you burn. If you eat 3,000 calories per day and burn 2,500, your surplus is 500 calories per day. When you are in a calorie surplus, your body either uses that extra energy to build muscle or store fat. Whether you build more muscle and less fat, more fat and less muscle, is determined not by the amount of calories you are consuming, but by your macronutrient ratio.

If you took two physically and genetically identical humans and fed them the exact same amount of calories (both being in a slight surplus) but Subject A consumes low protein, low carbs, and high fats, while Subject B consumed moderate protein, moderate fats, and high carbs, would the results be the same? Yes and no...you see, because the energy balance is the same, they would both have gained the same amount of weight, however, Subject B would have gained more muscle and less fat than Subject A due to the macronutrient ratio.

What are macronutrients?

Nutrients that the body uses in relatively large amounts - proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. This is as opposed to micronutrients, which the body requires in smaller amounts, such as vitamins and minerals. Macronutrients provide calories to the body as well as performing other functions.

If you ignore macronutrient breakdown and focus only on energy balance you will, more than likely...

- Not synthesize enough protein to build muscle
- Not recover efficiently from the training stimulus
- Not perform with enough power to stimulate new growth

Calculating Your Macronutrient Split

First I would like to start by mentioning that the formula I am about to reveal to you is not going to be 100% perfect for everyone, however, it will be the best starting point for most. Over time, adjustments will need to be made based on how your body is responding and having a starting point is going to make the adjusting stage much simpler.

Calculating Protein Intake

1 x Bodyweight in LBS = Protein per day in grams

Example: 140 lbs x 1 = 140 grams of protein per day

A safe bet: The above mentioned calculation is a standard recommendation. Feel free to use anything from 0.82-1.5 in place of the "1".

Word of advice: The majority of the protein in your diet should come from high quality sources such as eggs, milk, whey, chicken, beef, fish, etc.

Calculating Fat Intake

0.5 x Bodyweight in LBS = Fats per day in grams

Example: 140 lbs x 0.5 = 70 grams of fat per day

A safe bet: The above mentioned calculation is a standard recommendation. Feel free to use anything from 0.36-0.5 in place of the "0.5".

Word of advice: Supplement with fish oils, get a good mix of fats in your diet, and avoid hydrogenated oils.

Calculating Carbohydrate Intake

2.5 x Bodyweight in LBS = Carbs per day in grams

Example: 140 lbs x 2.5 = 350 grams of carbs per day

A safe bet: The above mentioned calculation is a standard recommendation. Feel free to use anything from 2.0-3.5 in place of the "2.5".

Word of advice: Don't worry too much about sugar intake as long as your micronutrients and fiber are in order. Remember, fast acting and slow acting carbohydrates are based on a flawed glycemic index and thus are only different when consumed on their own with no other macronutrient to accompany it. However, you will quickly realize that we never consume a carbohydrate source without any fat and/or protein to accompany it.

Calculating Your Fiber Intake

15 grams of fiber per 1000 calories

For example: Someone consuming 3000 calories should get about 45 grams of fiber per day.

A safe bet: The above mentioned calculation is a standard recommendation. Feel free to use anything from 10-15 in place of the "15 grams".

Adjusting Your Macronutrients

Weigh yourself every morning on an empty stomach and write it down. At the end of every week, calculate your average weigh-in for the week.



For example:

Monday 140.4

Tuesday 139.8

Wednesday 141.0

Thursday 140.4

Friday 141.1

Saturday 139.7

Sunday 140.1

Average weigh-in: 140.3

If your average weigh-in has not increased in a 2 week period, increase your carb intake by 25g. If your weight has increased by 1 lb or less, keep your nutrition as it is. If your weight has increased by 1.5lbs or more, cut your carbohydrates slightly. Remember that bulking for a natural bodybuilder is a slow process and that consistently gaining more than two pounds per month will likely yield excessive fat gain. With that said, I would recommend that you aim for 0.25-0.5 lbs of weight gain per week in order to maximize your muscle:fat ratio.

Step #2

Calculating Your Micronutrient Intake

What are Micronutrients?

Vitamins and minerals that are essential in minute amounts for the proper growth and metabolism of a living organism.

Minerals		Vitamins	
Macro-minerals	Micro-minerals	Fat Soluble	Water Soluble
Calcium, Phosphorus, Potassium, Sulfur, Sodium, Chlorine, and Magnesium	Iron, Cobalt, Copper, Zinc, Molybdenum, iodine, and Selenium	A, D, E, & K	B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B7, B9, B12, & C

Although the overall diet approach of this program is a flexible one where I encourage you to consume your favorite foods, regularly, I think it is worth mentioning that one should make it a habit of sticking to nutrient dense foods over non-nutrient dense foods for the majority of your meals. Although “eating healthy” or “eating clean” are bullshit terms, we should not ignore the importance of the micronutrient content in our foods.

Minerals	Vitamins
Beef	Broccoli
Poultry	Peanut Butter
Lamb	Seeds
Pork	Almonds
Beans	Sweet Potatoes
Legumes	Carrots
Leafy Greens	Pumpkin
Carrots	Beans
Bananas	Lentils
Peaches	Chicken
Grapes	Banana
Milk	Potatoes
Yogurt	Clams
	Salmon
	Beef
	Fruits
	Vegetables

Calculating Your Micronutrient Intake

Fruits and Vegetables	Your Caloric Intake	Servings per Day
	1200 – 2000 Calories Per Day	2 serv. Veggies + 2 serv. Fruit
	2000 - 3000 Calories Per Day	3 serv. Veggies + 3 serv. Fruit
	3000 – 4000 Calories Per Day	4 serv. Veggies + 4 serv. Fruit

Daily Water Intake

Water is essential for recovery from strenuous exercise. In fact, almost every mechanical process that occurs in your body takes place in water. With that said, you can understand much easier how detrimental dehydration can be towards your performance and recovery.



Calculating Water Intake

$(2/3) \times \text{Bodyweight in lbs} = \text{Daily Fluid Ounces (34 Fluid Ounces} = 1 \text{ Liter)}$

Example:

$(2/3) \times 170 \text{ lbs} = 113 \text{ Fluid Ounces (113/34} = 3.3 \text{ Liters per day)}$

A safe bet: Although there is no set-in-stone formula for water intake, there are some pretty simple guidelines. In my opinion, there are two other methods worth mentioning.

1. 5 of your daily urines should be clear – Lyle McDonald
2. 1.2 – 1.9 liters per day depending on activity level, environmental conditions, and size

Step #3

Preparing for Success In The Kitchen

Get a Calorie Calculator

We are in the 21st century and calculating your caloric intake does not have to be a tedious or prolonged process. There are applications available that will do the entire math for you. The only thing you are responsible for is weighing and entering your meals. The rest is taken care of by modern technology. For the sake of simplicity, I will recommend that you use the same calorie calculator as I. It is completely free, can be accessed by your phone or computer, and is easy to use.



Sign Up to My Fitness Pal or Download the App on your smart-phone: <http://myfitnesspal.com>

Get a Food Scale



Although there are people out there that can “eyeball” serving sizes fairly accurately, if you’re anything like me, you can’t. You’ll be surprised at how little an actual serving of cereal is...or how large 6oz of chicken really are.

If you fail to weigh your food accurately you will...

1. Under eat and potentially lose muscle
2. Over eat and potentially put on too much fat
3. Eat at a maintenance level and remain the same weight
4. Never get an accurate calculation of your caloric needs
5. Yo-yo back and forth between weight gain and weight loss

Schedule Your Meals

If you are finding it hard to meet your caloric requirements due to time constraints, I would highly recommend that you begin to schedule your meals. Not because eating every 2.5 hours is critical for muscle growth (because it's not), but because not consuming the necessary nutrients when you have the time could cause you to fail at reaching your caloric needs for the day. This could result in under-eating on certain days and although you are reaching your calorie needs on others, it simply will not be enough of a caloric surplus by the end of the week and could make or break your progress.

Everyone's schedule between work, school, parenting, etc, are different than others and thus some of us can only fit 2 meals in our day while others can fit 6 or more. Because we understand that meal frequency is not as important as we once thought, consuming 2 meals per day can be enough to build muscle as long as we are reaching our caloric needs for the day.

Prepare Your Food In Advance



Not everyone will need to prepare their meals in advance. However, if you are finding it hard to find time to prep your food during your day, then I would recommend that you do begin to pre-cook your meals. Again, this is not necessary, but can be helpful for anyone with a busy schedule or even someone who wants to make things a little easier on themselves.

Ways to Prepare Your Meals In Advance

1. Designate 1-2 hours every Sunday to pre-cooking your lunch for the entire week.
2. Take 1 hour every night to prepare all of the necessary meals for the following day.
3. Wake up 1 hour early to prepare all of the necessary meals for the day.
4. Choose 1-2 days per week, take 1-2 hours on those days to prepare meals to have ready throughout the week.

In Closing

A Few Words of Wisdom

Not sure where to get your calories?

Carbohydrates	Proteins	Dietary Fats
Oatmeal	Poultry	Eggs
Bread	Beef	Olive oil
Pasta	Eggs	Coconut Oil
Potatoes	Whey	Flaxseed Oil
Rice	Cheese	Peanut Butter
Vegetables	Cottage cheese	Almond Butter
Fruit	Fish	Almonds
Dried Fruit	Milk (2%, 1%, or soy)	Peanuts
Sugar	Beans	Avocado
Crackers	Bison	Salmon
Bagel	Lamb	Tuna
Yogurt	Pork	Butter
Quinoa	Veal	Macadamia
Sweet Potatoes	Greek Yogurt	Hazelnuts
		Cashews

Don't Over-Think It!

As you probably know by now, there is no right or wrong amount of times you should eat per day. But I would encourage you to choose a route that makes sense for yourself and your schedule. A Route that will make it easy to stay consistent and that will ensure you're meeting your total nutrients for the day without increasing daily stress.

So if you are extremely busy and cannot manage to eat every 2-3 hours...then don't.

If you need structure and must follow a schedule, then create one that fits perfectly in your day.

If you like structure and must follow a schedule but are limited on time, then pre cook your meals.

If you have the luxury of cooking and consuming as you see fit from day to day, then do so.

If you require a meal plan, then create one.

If you cannot afford a certain supplement, then don't buy it.

If consuming enough calories in order to remain in a caloric surplus is breaking the bank, then consider cheaper (not so nutrient dense) protein sources rather than not meeting your protein requirements at all. ([10 Inexpensive Protein Sources for Bulking on a Budget](#))

About The Author



Alain Gonzalez is a personal trainer, free lance writer and fitness consultant who has dedicated his life to helping others meet their fitness goals.

His transformation has been featured in articles on websites all over the internet and has given hope to countless hardgainers all over the world.

He is the founder of <http://www.MuscleMonsters.com>, a fitness site dedicated to helping skinny guys and gals to build muscle and stay lean, and is the author of "[Bony to Brawny](#)" – The skinny guy's secret to explosive muscle gains revealed.