NUTRITION GUIDE

UPDATED & EXPANDED EDITION

A practical evidence informed guide to eating well, supporting training and building habits that last

FUEL YOUR TRAINING. BUILD HABITS THAT LAST.

FAT LOSS | MUSCLE BUILDING | SUPPLEMENTS | MEAL IDEAS

THE CDTRAINING APPROACH

No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect. Learn the basics. Build meals you enjoy. Track what helps. Make changes you can keep.

For general education only. Individual nutrition needs vary. Seek appropriate professional advice where needed.

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Use this guide as both a first read and a reference you can return to during coaching.

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IMPORTANT

This guide is for general education. Individual needs vary with age, training, pregnancy, medical conditions, medication, allergies and dietary requirements. Clinical needs should be discussed with an appropriate healthcare professional.

SECTION 03

NUTRITION FUNDAMENTALS

Good nutrition is not one food or one macro. It is the overall pattern of energy intake, protein, carbohydrate, fat, fibre, micronutrients and fluids. Variety matters.

THE BASICS

- Eat a variety of foods across the week
- Include a useful protein source at most meals
- Include fruit and vegetables every day
- Use carbohydrate foods to support activity and training
- Choose mostly minimally processed foods, but enjoy the rest

BUILD MOST MEALS FROM FOUR PARTS

- **Protein:** chicken, fish, eggs, lean meat, Greek yoghurt, tofu, beans or protein powder
- **Carbohydrate:** rice, potatoes, oats, pasta, bread, fruit and grains
- **Plants:** vegetables, fruit, beans, pulses, nuts, seeds and wholegrains
- **Fats:** olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado and oily fish

THE EATWELL GUIDE IN ONE MINUTE

- Just over a third of your food from fruit and vegetables (aim for at least 5 portions of 80 g a day)
- Just over a third from starchy carbohydrates, choosing higher fibre or wholegrain versions where you can
- Some dairy or fortified alternatives, and some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
- Small amounts of unsaturated oils and spreads. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day
- Foods high in fat, salt or sugar: fine now and then, but not the base of the diet

THE GOAL

A healthy diet does not need to be perfect. It needs to be good enough to repeat for months and years. No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect.

SECTION 04

CALORIES AND ENERGY BALANCE

Calories are a measure of energy. Over time, changes in body mass are strongly influenced by energy intake compared with energy expenditure.

4 kcal/g	4 kcal/g	9 kcal/g
PROTEIN	CARBOHYDRATE	FAT

Alcohol also provides energy at about 7 kcal per gram, and fibre contributes roughly 2 kcal per gram.

WHERE YOUR ENERGY GOES

- **Resting metabolism (BMR):** usually the biggest slice, roughly 60 to 70 percent of daily energy
- **Digesting food:** about 10 percent. Protein costs more to digest than carbohydrate or fat
- **Everyday movement (NEAT):** walking, fidgeting, chores. Varies hugely between people
- **Training:** for most people a smaller slice than expected

A REALITY CHECK

- The NHS guide is about 2,500 kcal a day for men and 2,000 for women, but real needs vary widely
- Calorie counts on labels and apps are estimates
- Appetite and daily movement adjust when you diet or overeat
- That is why we use weekly trends, not single days

FOR FAT LOSS

- A sustained calorie deficit is needed for body mass to decrease over time
- Use a moderate approach that allows good training and recovery
- Keep protein adequate and continue resistance training
- Use weekly weight trends rather than one weigh in
- If progress stalls make a small adjustment rather than a drastic cut

FOR MUSCLE GAIN

- A calorie surplus can support muscle gain
- More food does not mean unlimited muscle gain
- Keep training progressive and protein adequate
- Monitor body weight and performance and adjust gradually

SCALE WEIGHT IS NOT BODY FAT

Water, glycogen, sodium, food volume, bowel contents and menstrual cycle changes can all move scale weight without a matching change in body fat. A salty takeaway or a big carbohydrate meal can add a kilo or more of water overnight.

SECTION 05

WORKING OUT YOUR CALORIES AND MACROS

A starting estimate beats guessing. Then your real life results, tracked over a few weeks, tell you how to adjust.

STEP 1: ESTIMATE MAINTENANCE

Use the Mifflin St Jeor equation, then multiply by an activity factor. **Men:** (10 x kg) + (6.25 x cm) - (5 x age) + 5. **Women:** (10 x kg) + (6.25 x cm) - (5 x age) - 161.

ACTIVITY LEVEL	MULTIPLY BMR BY
Little exercise, desk job	1.2
Light exercise 1 to 3 days a week	1.375
Moderate exercise 3 to 5 days a week	1.55
Hard exercise 6 to 7 days a week	1.725

Worked example: a 75 kg, 175 cm, 30 year old man. BMR = 1,700 kcal. At a 1.55 activity factor, maintenance is about 2,630 kcal.

STEP 2: PICK A DIRECTION

- Fat loss: about 300 to 500 kcal below maintenance
- Muscle gain: about 250 to 500 kcal above
- Maintenance: roughly where the estimate lands
- Smaller changes are easier to stick to

STEP 3: SET PROTEIN AND FAT FIRST

- Protein: about 1.6 to 2.0 g per kg body weight
- Fat: roughly 0.6 to 1.0 g per kg, or about 20 to 35 percent of calories
- Carbohydrate: the rest. This is the flexible one
- Check it against how you feel in training

EXAMPLE FOR THE 75 KG MAN

GOAL	CALORIES	PROTEIN	FAT	CARBOHYDRATE
Maintain	2,630	135 g	70 g	366 g
Fat loss (about -400)	2,230	135 g	60 g	288 g
Muscle gain (about +300)	2,930	135 g	75 g	430 g

Calories are rounded to the nearest 10 and carbohydrate is what remains once protein and fat are set (4 kcal per gram of protein and carbohydrate, 9 per gram of fat).

STEP 4: LET REAL LIFE DECIDE

Follow the numbers consistently for 2 to 3 weeks. Compare your weekly average weight, your waist, your energy and your training. If nothing moves, change calories by about 100 to 150 kcal. The estimate is only the starting line.

SECTION 06

PROTEIN

Protein provides amino acids for tissue repair, muscle protein synthesis and many other biological functions.

0.75 g/kg	~1.6 g/kg	~2.0 g/kg
UK RNI, GENERAL ADULTS	PRACTICAL TARGET	PRACTICAL UPPER RANGE

USEFUL PROTEIN SOURCES

Chicken, turkey, lean beef, fish and seafood, eggs, dairy, Greek yoghurt, skyr, cottage cheese, tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils and protein powder when convenience helps.

EVIDENCE NOTE

Around 1.6 g per kg per day is a useful evidence informed target for many resistance trained adults. Higher intakes can be useful in some dieting situations but are not automatically better. The UK reference intake of 0.75 g per kg is the minimum to meet needs for the general population, not an ideal for training.

SPREAD IT ACROSS THE DAY

A dose of about 20 to 40 g (roughly 0.25 to 0.4 g per kg) per meal, three or four times a day, works well for muscle. The exact number of meals matters less than hitting the daily total.

COMMON PROTEIN MYTHS

- "Your body can only absorb 30 g": it absorbs more, it just uses it over a longer time
- Healthy kidneys cope fine with higher protein. Existing kidney disease needs medical advice
- More protein does not mean faster muscle without training
- Protein powder is food convenience, not magic

DAILY PROTEIN BY BODY WEIGHT

BODY WEIGHT	1.6 G/KG (PRACTICAL TARGET)	1.8 G/KG	2.0 G/KG (PRACTICAL UPPER RANGE)
60 kg	96 g	108 g	120 g
70 kg	112 g	126 g	140 g
80 kg	128 g	144 g	160 g
90 kg	144 g	162 g	180 g
100 kg	160 g	180 g	200 g

SIMPLE RULE

Build each main meal around a clear protein source. Then add carbohydrate, plants and a suitable fat source.

SECTION 07

PROTEIN CHEAT SHEET

Approximate values to help you build meals. Brands and cuts vary, so check the label when accuracy matters.

FOOD	PROTEIN PER 100 G	TYPICAL PORTION	PROTEIN PER PORTION	NOTE
Chicken breast (cooked)	31 g	150 g	46 g	Leanest everyday choice
Turkey (cooked)	27 g	150 g	40 g	
Lean beef (cooked)	28 g	120 g	34 g	Red meat: up to 70 g a day on average
Salmon (cooked)	22 g	150 g	33 g	Oily fish: omega 3
Cod (cooked)	22 g	150 g	33 g	White fish: very lean
Tuna (canned in water)	25 g	100 g	25 g	Drained
Prawns (cooked)	22 g	100 g	22 g	
Eggs	12.5 g	100 g	12 g	About two large eggs
Greek yoghurt (0%)	10 g	200 g	20 g	
Skyr	11 g	150 g	16 g	
Cottage cheese	11.5 g	150 g	17 g	
Firm tofu	14 g	150 g	21 g	
Tempeh	19 g	100 g	19 g	
Lentils (cooked)	9 g	150 g	14 g	Also a carbohydrate source
Chickpeas (canned)	7 g	150 g	10 g	Also a carbohydrate source
Whey protein powder	77 g	30 g	23 g	Check the label

HOW TO USE THIS PAGE

Pick two or three protein foods you enjoy from different groups and rotate them. Three meals with 25 to 40 g of protein each, plus a snack or shake, lands in the 100 to 160 g range.

SECTION 08

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are an important fuel source. They are especially useful for higher intensity exercise because stored carbohydrate can be accessed quickly.

USEFUL CARBOHYDRATE SOURCES

- Oats
- Rice
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Pasta
- Bread and wraps
- Fruit
- Beans and lentils
- Wholegrain cereals

AROUND TRAINING

- Before training choose carbohydrate you digest comfortably
- After training carbohydrate helps replenish glycogen
- Total daily intake matters more than obsessing over a tiny post workout window

HOW MUCH?

There is no single number. Many people training a few times a week do well on roughly 3 to 5 g per kg a day, rising to 5 to 7 g or more for long or high volume training. Fat loss days or low appetite may sit lower. Let performance and energy guide you.

STARCH, SUGAR AND FIBRE

- Starch: rice, potatoes, oats, bread, pasta
- Sugars: fruit, milk, sweets, drinks. Free sugars are the ones to limit
- Fibre: the part you cannot digest, but your gut loves
- Wholegrains keep fibre, B vitamins and minerals

CARBS ARE NOT THE ENEMY

Carbohydrate does not automatically cause fat gain. Total energy intake and dietary pattern matter. Match intake to activity, goals and preference. The glycaemic index (GI) ranks how fast foods raise blood glucose, but it matters far less in mixed meals than in textbooks.

SECTION 09

DIETARY FATS

Fat is essential for cell membranes, hormone production, energy and absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K.

9 kcal/g
ENERGY IN FAT

30 g
MAX SATURATED FAT FOR MEN/DAY

20 g
MAX SATURATED FAT FOR WOMEN/DAY

TYPE	EXAMPLES	PRACTICAL POINT
Monounsaturated	Olive oil, avocado, nuts, rapeseed oil	Useful unsaturated fat source
Polyunsaturated	Oily fish, seeds, walnuts, vegetable oils	Includes omega 3 and omega 6
Saturated	Butter, cheese, fatty meat, coconut oil, pastries	Keep within UK guidance and replace some with unsaturated fats
Trans fats	Some industrially produced fats	Keep intake as low as possible

FAT IS NOT BAD

The important question is how much and what type. Unsaturated fats are an important part of a balanced diet. Very low fat diets can affect vitamin absorption and satisfaction. Many people do well with roughly 20 to 35 percent of calories from fat.

FAT AND FEELING FULL

Fat slows digestion and makes meals satisfying, but it is also the most calorie dense nutrient. A tablespoon of olive oil (15 g) is about 135 kcal and 20 g of peanut butter is about 120 kcal.

PRACTICAL TIP

Measure oils, nut butters, cheese and dressings for a period if calorie control is important. Portion awareness is more useful than fearing nutritious high fat foods.

SECTION 10

SUGAR WITHOUT THE FEAR

Sugar is not a poison and eating sugar does not automatically make a diet unhealthy. The useful distinction is between total sugars and free sugars.

FREE SUGARS INCLUDE

- Sugar added during cooking or manufacturing
- Honey, syrups and similar ingredients
- Sugar in fruit juice and juice concentrates

NATURALLY OCCURRING SUGARS

- Whole fruit
- Vegetables
- Plain milk
- Plain yoghurt

THE NHS REFERENCE

Adults should have no more than 30 g of free sugars per day, about 7 sugar cubes. This is a limit for free sugars rather than a ban on foods containing sugar. Whole fruit and plain dairy are not treated the same way.

WHERE IT HIDES

- A 330 ml can of regular cola has about 35 g, more than the daily limit
- Sauces, flavoured yoghurts, cereals and granola
- Smoothies and juice: 150 ml a day counts as one of your 5 a day, no more
- Energy drinks, coffee shop drinks and "healthy" bars

SWEETENERS

Approved sweeteners are considered safe at normal intakes and can help swap out sugar in drinks. They are not a magic fix, and no single swap replaces an overall balanced diet.

THE PRACTICAL MESSAGE

Sugary drinks and energy dense foods can make it easy to consume more energy than intended. Enjoying a sweet food can still fit within an overall balanced diet. Look at the whole pattern rather than one ingredient.

SECTION 11

FIBRE AND GUT HEALTH

Fibre supports normal bowel function and is associated with a range of health benefits. A varied plant rich diet is the easiest way to increase it.

~30 g/day

UK ADULT REFERENCE

HIGH FIBRE FOODS

- Oats and wholegrain cereals
- Wholegrain bread and pasta
- Beans, lentils and chickpeas
- Fruit and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds
- Potatoes with the skin where practical

INCREASE GRADUALLY

- Increase fibre over time if intake is low
- Drink enough fluid
- Spread higher fibre foods across the day
- Persistent digestive symptoms need appropriate healthcare advice

SOLUBLE AND INSOLUBLE

Soluble fibre (oats, beans, fruit) forms a gel and helps with cholesterol and blood sugar. Insoluble fibre (wholegrains, veg skins) adds bulk and helps keep things moving. Most plant foods contain both.

READING FIBRE CLAIMS

"Source of fibre" means at least 3 g per 100 g. "High fibre" means at least 6 g per 100 g. Check the label per 100 g to compare breads and cereals.

DO NOT CHASE FIBRE AT ALL COSTS

More is not always better for every individual. The target is a practical healthy intake that the person can tolerate. Fermented foods such as live yoghurt and kefir can suit some people, and fibre feeds your gut bacteria, but there is no single "perfect gut" diet.

SECTION 12

HYDRATION AND DRINKS

Most people need to drink more water than they think but far less than the internet suggests. Pale yellow urine and no thirst are a good everyday guide.

EVERYDAY FLUID

- Aim for about 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day (around 1.5 to 2 litres)
- Water, lower fat milk, tea, coffee and sugar free drinks all count
- Needs rise in heat, in hard training and when ill
- Pale straw coloured urine is a good sign. Dark urine means drink more

AROUND TRAINING

- Start sessions well hydrated
- For sessions under an hour, sip to thirst
- For long or sweaty sessions, add fluid and some sodium
- Weigh before and after hard summer sessions: replace roughly what you lost over the next few hours
- Do not force huge volumes. Overdrinking can cause low blood sodium

CAFFEINE

- Up to about 400 mg a day from all sources is considered fine for most healthy adults
- Roughly: mug of instant coffee 60 to 100 mg, mug of tea 40 to 75 mg, can of energy drink about 80 mg
- Stop caffeine at least 6 to 8 hours before bed if sleep is an issue
- Pregnancy limit: 200 mg a day

SMART DRINK CHOICES

- Water and sparkling water first
- Milk is a great post training drink
- Fruit juice and smoothies: 150 ml a day counts as one of your 5 a day
- Sports drinks: only worthwhile for long or intense sessions
- Diet and zero drinks are fine in moderation

ALCOHOL COUNTS TOO

Alcohol is not hydrating and adds calories. See the alcohol section for units, calories and how it affects training.

SECTION 13

VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Micronutrients are needed in smaller amounts but are essential for normal body function. Food first is the default approach.

NUTRIENT	FOOD SOURCES	WHY IT MATTERS	UK ADULT RNI
Iron	Meat, beans, lentils, leafy greens, fortified cereals	Normal blood formation and oxygen transport	8.7 mg men. 14.8 mg women 19 to 50
Calcium	Dairy, fortified alternatives, tofu, tinned fish with bones	Bones, teeth, muscle and nerve function	700 mg
Vitamin D	Oily fish, eggs, fortified foods, sunlight	Bone and muscle health	10 micrograms (autumn and winter)
Vitamin C	Fruit, peppers, broccoli	Immune function and collagen formation	40 mg
Vitamin B12	Meat, fish, eggs, dairy, fortified foods	Blood and nervous system function	1.5 micrograms
Iodine	Dairy, fish, eggs, iodised salt	Thyroid hormone production	140 micrograms
Magnesium	Nuts, seeds, wholegrains, leafy greens, pulses	Muscle, nerve and energy processes	300 mg men. 270 mg women
Zinc	Meat, shellfish, dairy, pulses, seeds	Immune function and recovery	9.5 mg men. 7 mg women
Potassium	Fruit, vegetables, beans, potatoes, milk	Fluid balance and blood pressure	3,500 mg

VITAMIN D IN THE UK

UK guidance commonly advises adults to consider 10 micrograms of vitamin D daily during autumn and winter. Some higher risk groups are advised to take it year round.

LEARN THE RAINBOW

Different colours often mean different nutrients. Red and orange veg bring vitamin A precursors, green leafy veg bring folate and vitamin K, berries and purple foods bring polyphenols. A varied plate does most of the work.

SECTION 14

OMEGA 3 AND OMEGA 6

Omega 3 and omega 6 are families of polyunsaturated fats. The main omega 3s discussed in nutrition are ALA, EPA and DHA.

THE THREE OMEGA 3S

- ALA: flaxseed, chia, walnuts and rapeseed oil
- EPA and DHA: mainly oily fish and algae
- Conversion of ALA to EPA and DHA is limited

OMEGA 6

Found in nuts, seeds and vegetable oils. It is part of a normal healthy diet. There is no need to avoid it, just include omega 3 sources too.

FOOD FIRST

A practical UK target is two portions (140 g each) of fish each week including one portion of oily fish. Good sources include salmon, sardines, mackerel, trout and herring. Most adults can have up to four portions of oily fish a week. Plant based diets can use algae based sources of EPA and DHA.

OMEGA 3 SUPPLEMENTS

Routine omega 3 supplementation is not recommended for the general UK population because evidence for broad benefit is inconclusive. If a supplement is considered because fish intake is low, check the EPA and DHA amounts on the label. Algae based options are available for plant based diets.

SECTION 15

SUPPLEMENTS EXPLAINED

Supplements are optional tools. They can be useful when they solve a real problem but they should not replace a solid diet.

1 FOOD QUALITY AND ADEQUATE ENERGY

2 PROTEIN AND OVERALL DIET

3 TRAINING, SLEEP AND RECOVERY

4 EVIDENCE BASED SUPPLEMENTS WHERE USEFUL

5 EVERYTHING ELSE

WHEN SUPPLEMENTS MAKE SENSE

A diagnosed deficiency. A dietary pattern that makes a nutrient difficult to obtain. A life stage with specific requirements. A practical performance supplement with good evidence. Or advice from a qualified professional.

SAFE SHOPPING CHECKLIST

- Buy from reputable UK retailers
- Read the label for doses and warnings
- Choose third party tested products (such as Informed Sport) if you compete
- Be wary of "proprietary blends"
- Tell a pharmacist or GP about everything you take

RED FLAGS

- Miracle claims and before and after photos
- Products that promise fast fat loss or muscle
- Very high doses of single nutrients
- Anything that sounds like a drug
- Pressure to buy bundles or subscriptions

SECTION 16

CREATINE MONOHYDRATE

Creatine is one of the most extensively researched sports supplements. Its main role is supporting the rapid regeneration of ATP during short intense efforts.

WHAT CREATINE IS

Creatine is naturally occurring and stored mainly in skeletal muscle. The body synthesises it from amino acids. Dietary creatine is obtained mainly from animal foods such as meat and fish. Plant based diets generally provide much less dietary creatine.

WHAT IT DOES

Muscle stores creatine as phosphocreatine. Phosphocreatine helps rapidly regenerate ATP during short high intensity work. This can support strength training, sprinting and repeated high intensity exercise.

WHAT IT CAN HELP WITH

Evidence supports improvements in high intensity exercise capacity, strength and lean mass gains when creatine is combined with resistance training.

HOW TO USE IT

Choose plain creatine monohydrate. A simple practical approach is 3 to 5 g every day. Timing is less important than consistent use. A loading phase is optional. Drinking normally is enough.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Some people gain a small amount of body weight (often 1 to 2 kg) as muscle creatine and associated water increase. This is not the same as gaining body fat. Creatine is not magic and still relies on training, food, sleep and recovery.

GOOD TO KNOW

- It is well studied and generally considered safe for healthy adults
- It can raise creatinine on blood tests without harming kidneys. Tell your GP you take it
- People with kidney disease should ask their doctor first
- Look for plain creatine monohydrate from a reputable brand

SECTION 17

PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENTS

A few supplements have useful evidence in specific situations. The benefit is usually modest and context dependent.

CAFFEINE

The researched dose is about 3 to 6 mg per kg taken roughly an hour before training, but many people feel the benefit from 2 to 3 mg per kg, and UK guidance is up to about 400 mg a day from all sources, so start low. Avoid relying on stimulants to compensate for poor sleep. People with relevant medical conditions or medication needs should seek appropriate advice.

PROTEIN POWDER

Whey, casein and plant based powders can be convenient ways to reach a daily protein target. They are food convenience rather than a special muscle building substance.

CARBOHYDRATE

Useful around longer or harder sessions where fuel availability matters. For hard exercise lasting longer than about an hour, 30 to 60 g of carbohydrate per hour is the usual guide. Food and drinks can be used depending on the session.

ELECTROLYTES

Most people can cover normal hydration needs with food and fluids. Electrolytes can become more relevant during prolonged sweaty exercise or heat.

OTHER RESEARCHED OPTIONS

- Beetroot juice (nitrate): small benefits in some endurance work
- Beta alanine: can help repeated efforts of 1 to 4 minutes, may cause tingling
- Vitamin D: only if you are low or in the UK winter
- Check each product for safety if you compete

WHAT MATTERS MOST

A supplement should add a small advantage to an already solid routine. It should never be the foundation of the programme.

SECTION 18

SUPPLEMENTS TO THINK TWICE ABOUT

More supplements does not mean more progress. High dose products can be unnecessary and in some cases harmful.

PRODUCT OR CATEGORY	WHY ROUTINE USE MAY NOT BE NEEDED
Iron	Supplement when deficiency or a medical indication is established
High dose zinc	Long term excess can interfere with copper status
High dose vitamin A	Excess can be harmful
High dose vitamin D	More is not better and excess can cause toxicity
Mega dose vitamin C	Usually unnecessary with a varied diet
BCAA supplements	Usually unnecessary when daily protein is already adequate
Detox products	No good evidence that they cleanse the body
Fat burners	Often rely on stimulants and are not a substitute for an energy deficit
Testosterone boosters	Evidence is generally poor for meaningful effects in healthy adults
Greens and superfood powders	Not a substitute for fruit, vegetables and pulses
Collagen and joint "miracle" products	Evidence is limited and mixed. Protein from food counts too
Pre workouts with huge stimulant doses	Easy to overshoot caffeine and cause palpitations or poor sleep

DEFICIENCY RULE

If someone suspects a deficiency they should speak to an appropriate healthcare professional rather than guessing with high dose supplements. Supplements can interact with medication.

SECTION 19

ALCOHOL AND YOUR GOALS

Alcohol is part of life for many people. Knowing the numbers lets you decide how it fits rather than guessing.

14 units
UK LOW RISK LIMIT PER WEEK

7 kcal/g
ENERGY IN ALCOHOL

3+ days
SPREAD DRINKING OUT

DRINK	UNITS	ENERGY FROM ALCOHOL ALONE
Pint of 4% beer or lager	2.3	~125 kcal
Bottle of 5% lager (330 ml)	1.6	~90 kcal
Small glass of 12% wine (125 ml)	1.5	~85 kcal
Medium glass of 12% wine (175 ml)	2.1	~115 kcal
Large glass of 12% wine (250 ml)	3.0	~165 kcal
Single 40% spirit (25 ml)	1.0	~55 kcal

One UK unit is 10 ml (about 8 g) of pure alcohol. Mixers, sugar and carbohydrates in drinks add more energy on top of the alcohol itself.

HOW IT AFFECTS TRAINING

- Poor sleep quality and slower recovery
- Heavy drinking after training can blunt muscle protein synthesis
- Dehydration and weaker performance the next day
- Lowers inhibitions around food, so late night takeaways follow

SMARTER DRINKING

- Pick your occasions rather than drinking daily
- Eat protein and carbohydrate before you drink
- Alternate with water or a zero drink
- Choose lower strength options
- Plan your day so the calories fit

THE HONEST BIT

There is no completely safe level of alcohol. The UK low risk guidance is no more than 14 units a week, spread over three or more days, with several drink free days. If cutting down feels hard, talk to your GP.

SECTION 20

SLEEP, STRESS AND APPETITE

Sleep and stress are the quiet drivers behind food choices, cravings and recovery. They deserve a place in any nutrition plan.

7-9 hrs
SLEEP FOR MOST ADULTS

6-8 hrs
CAFFEINE CUT OFF BEFORE BED

150 min
MODERATE ACTIVITY PER WEEK

WHAT POOR SLEEP DOES

- Increases hunger and cravings for energy dense foods
- Lowers willpower and mood
- Slows recovery and hurts training quality
- Makes it harder to lose fat and keep muscle

SLEEP HABITS THAT HELP

- Consistent bedtime and wake time
- Light and movement in the morning
- Cool, dark bedroom
- Big meals and heavy drinking not too close to bed
- Wind down screens and work before bed

STRESS AND EATING

- Stress can raise appetite for comfort foods in some people and kill it in others
- Try a short walk, call a friend or breathing exercise before reaching for food
- Keep easy meals ready for stressful weeks
- Treat a stressful day as normal, not as a failure

MOVEMENT HELPS

- The UK guidelines: 150 minutes of moderate activity a week plus strength work on two days
- Walking counts and eases stress
- Training is also a stress, so match it to sleep and food

WHEN TO GET HELP

Persistent low mood, anxiety, constant exhaustion or sleep problems that last weeks are worth talking to a GP about. Nutrition cannot fix everything.

SECTION 21

HUNGER, FULLNESS AND EATING HABITS

Understanding hunger makes dieting far calmer. Hunger is information, not an enemy.

PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HUNGER?

- Physical: builds gradually, any food will do, goes away when you eat
- Emotional: sudden, specific craving, linked to a feeling, lingers after eating
- Ask: "Would a meal I like solve this?"
- Neither is wrong. Notice, then choose

THE 1 TO 10 SCALE

- 1 to 3: very hungry
- 4 to 6: comfortable
- 7 to 10: full to stuffed
- Aim to start eating around 3 to 4 and stop around 6 to 7
- It is a guide, not a rule

FOODS THAT KEEP YOU FULL

- Protein: eggs, Greek yoghurt, fish, chicken, tofu, beans
- Fibre: vegetables, oats, pulses, fruit
- Volume: soups, salads, potatoes, fruit
- Slow eaten meals. It takes time for fullness signals to arrive

CRAVINGS

- Do not ban the food. Plan it
- Eat enough protein and fibre earlier in the day
- Avoid keeping large amounts of trigger foods in the house
- Pause for ten minutes, then decide
- Enjoy it without guilt

EATING WITHOUT AUTOPILOT

Eating at a table, without a screen, even for one meal a day, helps you notice fullness and enjoy the food more. Mindful eating is a skill, not a diet.

IF FOOD FEELS OUT OF CONTROL

Repeated bingeing, strict rules, guilt, secrecy or restricting and then overeating can be signs of disordered eating. A GP, or charities such as Beat, can help. It is nothing to be ashamed of.

SECTION 22

HOW TO TRACK FOOD

Tracking can be useful when accuracy matters or when someone wants to understand portion sizes. It is not compulsory.

TRACKING CHECKLIST

- Use one app consistently
- Weigh foods while learning portions
- Check whether the entry is raw or cooked
- Track oils, sauces, spreads, drinks and snacks
- Enter every recipe ingredient and divide by portions
- Use food labels where possible

KEEP IT HONEST

- Pick verified entries (look for a tick or barcode scan)
- A kitchen scale is the best tool you can buy
- Log as you go, not at night
- Weekends and takeaways count too
- Accept that estimates are imperfect

RAW VERSUS COOKED

Rice and pasta absorb water during cooking. Meat can lose water. The same food can therefore have a very different weight after cooking. Match the database entry to the state of the food you weighed.

WEEKLY AVERAGES

One high or low day does not define progress. Look at trends across the week and make changes gradually.

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU TRACK?

A few weeks to a few months is plenty to learn portions. Then you can use the eyeball method, hand portions and weekly checks, and return to tracking when needed.

OTHER OPTIONS

- Photo diary of meals
- Hand portion guide
- Simple habit tracking: protein at every meal, veg twice a day
- Weekly weigh in average only

TRACKING SHOULD REDUCE UNCERTAINTY

If tracking makes eating stressful use simpler habits instead. The best system is the one you can follow.

SECTION 23

FOOD LABELS AND PORTIONS

Nutrition labels are tools for comparison. They are not a verdict on whether a food is good or bad.

CHECK PER 100 G

- Energy shows calorie density
- Protein helps compare protein contribution
- Fibre helps identify higher fibre choices
- Saturates can help manage saturated fat intake
- Salt helps you keep an eye on sodium
- Ingredients show what the product is mainly made from

HAND PORTION GUIDE

- Protein: a palm sized portion
- Carbohydrate: a cupped handful of cooked starch
- Vegetables: two open handfuls
- Fats: a thumb sized portion
- A fruit or veg portion is about 80 g, roughly a handful

FRONT OF PACK TRAFFIC LIGHTS

PER 100 G	LOW (GREEN)	MEDIUM (AMBER)	HIGH (RED)
Fat	3 g or less	More than 3 g to 17.5 g	More than 17.5 g
Saturates	1.5 g or less	More than 1.5 g to 5 g	More than 5 g
Sugars	5 g or less	More than 5 g to 22.5 g	More than 22.5 g
Salt	0.3 g or less	More than 0.3 g to 1.5 g	More than 1.5 g

CLAIMS DECODED

CLAIM ON PACK	WHAT IT MEANS
Low fat	3 g of fat or less per 100 g
Sugar free	Less than 0.5 g sugars per 100 g
No added sugar	No sugar added, but the food may still contain natural sugars
Source of protein	At least 12 percent of energy from protein
High protein	At least 20 percent of energy from protein
Source of fibre / high fibre	At least 3 g / 6 g per 100 g
Low salt	0.3 g of salt or less per 100 g

SIMPLE SHOPPING SYSTEM

Choose a protein source. Choose a carbohydrate. Add fruit or vegetables. Add a measured fat source. Then choose foods you genuinely enjoy.

SECTION 24

SHOPPING ON A BUDGET

Eating well does not need to be expensive. A few smart habits keep costs down and protein up.

CHEAP PROTEIN HEROES

- Eggs
- Tinned tuna, sardines and mackerel
- Frozen chicken thighs and mince
- Lentils, beans and chickpeas
- Cottage cheese and bulk Greek yoghurt
- Oats, which also bring fibre
- Tofu

SMART SHOPPING

- Plan 4 to 5 dinners, then shop for them
- Check price per 100 g of protein, not per pack
- Own brand basics are usually the same nutrition
- Frozen fruit and veg are cheap, nutritious and count as 5 a day
- Buy reduced items and freeze them

BATCH AND REPURPOSE

- Cook one big pot and eat it three ways
- Roast a chicken: meals, sandwiches, soup
- Use stale bread for breadcrumbs
- Freeze portions before they go off

WASTE LESS, SAVE MORE

- Learn the difference between use by and best before
- Store food properly (see food safety)
- Keep a "use first" shelf in the fridge
- Love your leftovers

THE CHEAP SHOPPING LIST

Eggs, oats, rice, potatoes, frozen veg, tinned tomatoes, beans or lentils, frozen chicken or fish, bananas, milk or Greek yoghurt, wholemeal bread, a few herbs and spices. That covers dozens of meals.

SECTION 25

FOOD SAFETY AT HOME

Meal prep and leftovers are brilliant, as long as they are safe. A few simple rules prevent most food poisoning.

FOOD SAFETY ESSENTIAL	THE RULE
Fridge temperature	Keep it at 5 degrees C or below
Freezer temperature	Keep it at minus 18 degrees C or colder
Cooked leftovers	Cool quickly, refrigerate, and eat within 2 days
Rice	Cool within 1 hour, keep in the fridge no more than 1 day, reheat until steaming hot throughout
Reheating	Until steaming hot all the way through. Only reheat once
Chicken and mince	Cook until no pink meat is left, juices run clear and it is steaming hot
Defrosting	Overnight in the fridge, or in the microwave and cook straight away
Raw chicken	Do not wash it. It spreads germs. Cooking kills them

CROSS CONTAMINATION

- Keep raw meat and fish at the bottom of the fridge, covered
- Use separate boards and knives for raw and ready to eat food
- Wash hands after touching raw meat
- Clean surfaces and cloths often

DATES ON PACKS

- **Use by:** a safety date. Do not eat after it
- **Best before:** a quality date. Usually safe afterwards if stored well
- Freezing stops the clock. Freeze before the use by date
- When in doubt, throw it out

MEAL PREP TIP

Cool cooked meals in shallow containers, then lid and refrigerate or freeze. Label with the date. Frozen food stays safe, with best quality typically in the first 3 months.

SECTION 26

MEAL PREP AND FREEZER MEALS

Preparation reduces decision fatigue. The aim is not to eat the same meal forever. It is to make good choices easier on busy days.

FREEZER FRIENDLY

- Chicken fajita wraps
- Breakfast wraps
- Lean beef chilli
- Chicken curry
- Chicken and rice bowls
- Cooked grains and potatoes

FOOD SAFETY

- Cool cooked food promptly
- Use suitable containers
- Label portions and dates
- Reheat thoroughly
- Keep fresh toppings separate when texture matters

A ONE HOUR PREP SESSION

- Cook a big batch of rice or potatoes
- Bake a tray of chicken or tofu
- Roast or steam vegetables
- Make one sauce or curry
- Portion into containers and label

KEEP IT INTERESTING

Keep the base meal consistent, then change herbs, spices, sauces or toppings. Sriracha, salsa, pesto, curry paste or lemon and herbs can make the same prep taste completely different.

FREEZER MEAL FORMULA

Protein + carbohydrate + vegetables + sauce. Keep the base meal consistent then change herbs, spices or toppings so the same prep does not feel repetitive.

SECTION 27

EATING OUT, TAKEAWAYS AND SOCIAL LIFE

Food is social. You can enjoy meals out and still make progress with a few simple habits.

CUISINE	USUALLY LIGHTER, HIGHER PROTEIN PICKS	WATCH OUT FOR
Italian	Grilled fish or chicken, tomato based pasta, thin crust pizza with veg	Cream sauces, garlic bread, extra cheese
Indian	Tandoori chicken or fish, dahl, chana masala, plain rice or roti	Creamy kormas, ghee heavy dishes, naan and sides
Chinese and Thai	Steamed fish, stir fries, chicken with veg, lighter broths	Deep fried dishes, sweet sauces, large rice portions
Mexican	Burrito bowls, fajitas, grilled meats, beans and salsa	Cheese, soured cream, tortilla chips
Pub and burger	Grilled chicken, burgers with a side salad, roast dinners	Fried sides, creamy sauces, large portions
Japanese	Sashimi, grilled fish, rice, edamame, miso	Tempura, sweet sauces, mayo based rolls

BEFORE YOU GO

- Look at the menu online
- Eat normally during the day. Do not save up calories
- Pick your main treat and enjoy it
- In England, larger chains must show calories on menus

AT THE TABLE

- Start with protein, then add carbohydrates and veg
- Ask for sauces on the side
- Share a dessert or a starter
- Slow down and enjoy conversation
- Drink water alongside

THE 80 PERCENT RULE

If most of your meals most of the time are balanced, the occasional meal out will not matter. Enjoy the food, enjoy the company, and carry on with your next meal as usual.

SECTION 28

TRAVEL, SHIFTS AND BUSY WEEKS

Real life is messy. A flexible plan beats a perfect one that collapses on a busy week.

SHIFT WORK AND LONG DAYS

- Plan your main meals around your sleep, not the clock
- Pack food for the whole shift
- Keep caffeine for the first half of a shift
- Keep protein high and meals simple overnight
- Hydrate and eat something before the drive home

TRAVEL KIT

- Protein bars or shakes
- Nuts and fruit
- Instant oats or porridge pots
- Tinned fish and wraps
- A reusable water bottle

AIRPORTS AND HOTELS

- Look for eggs, yoghurt, fruit and porridge at breakfast
- Choose grilled protein and a side salad or veg
- Walk when you can
- Use hotel gyms or bodyweight sessions

HOLIDAYS

- Eat well most of the time and enjoy the local food
- Keep moving with walks and swims
- Do not "start Monday" after one meal
- Weight on your return is mostly water

THE MINIMUM EFFECTIVE PLAN

On chaotic weeks, aim for just three things: protein at each meal, a few fruit or veg portions, and a daily walk. That keeps you moving forward without stress.

SECTION 29

MAKING CHANGES THAT LAST

The most effective diet is usually the one a person can follow during busy weeks, weekends, holidays, social events and stressful periods.

SMALL CHANGES THAT WORK

- Change one meal before changing the whole day
- Add protein before removing foods
- Add fruit or vegetables before cutting treats
- Reduce portions slightly rather than crash dieting
- Keep easy meals available
- Use frozen vegetables and freezer meals
- Plan for weekends

HABIT TOOLS

- Stack it: add the new habit to an existing one (fruit with your morning coffee)
- Make it obvious: keep fruit visible, snacks out of sight
- Make it easy: prep ahead, buy ready chopped veg
- Make it small: start with two minutes or one portion
- Plan it: "If it is Tuesday, then I cook batch chicken"

THE RESET RULE

A higher calorie meal is not a failed diet. Return to normal at the next meal. Do not punish it with starvation or excessive exercise.

THINK IN SYSTEMS

Ask what breakfast you can repeat. What lunch you can prepare. What food you can keep at work. What you will eat when you are tired. Those answers create the diet.

CONSISTENCY OVER PERFECTION

No crash diets. No forbidden foods. No need to be perfect. Aim for about 80 percent good days and let the rest be life.

CHAPTER: FAT LOSS

FAT LOSS

Fat loss comes from a sustained, moderate calorie deficit with enough protein and training to protect muscle. Small, repeatable changes beat dramatic ones.

300-500 kcal
TYPICAL DAILY DEFICIT

0.5-1%
BODY WEIGHT LOST PER WEEK

1.8-2.0 g/kg
PROTEIN IN A DEFICIT

STEP 1: SET YOUR TARGET

Use the calorie and macro steps earlier in this guide to estimate maintenance, then eat about 300 to 500 kcal below it. Check your weekly average weight after two to three weeks and adjust by small amounts.

STEP 2: PROTEIN FIRST

Aim for about 1.8 to 2.0 g per kg of body weight, spread over three to four meals. Protein helps you feel full and helps protect muscle in a deficit.

STEP 3: BUILD VOLUME

Fill plates with vegetables, salad, fruit, potatoes, beans and lean protein. Soups, big salads and stir fries are very filling for their calories. Choose higher fibre carbohydrates and drink plenty of water.

STEP 4: WATCH LIQUID CALORIES

Sugary drinks, milky coffees, juices, smoothies and alcohol can add hundreds of calories without filling you up. Swapping them is often the easiest win.

CALORIE DENSE FOODS: HEALTHY, BUT MEASURE THEM

CALORIE DENSE FOOD	PORTION	ABOUT
Olive oil	1 tbsp (15 g)	135 kcal
Peanut butter	1 heaped tbsp (20 g)	120 kcal
Almonds	Small handful (30 g)	175 kcal
Cheddar cheese	Matchbox size (30 g)	120 kcal
Avocado	Half (70 g)	105 kcal
Hummus	2 tbsp (50 g)	105 kcal

SMALL SWAPS THAT ADD UP

Measure oil rather than pouring. Choose leaner mince and trim visible fat. Use yoghurt or herbs instead of creamy sauces. Order the smaller coffee. Keep nuts to a handful. Save energy for foods you really love.

CHAPTER: FAT LOSS (CONTINUED)

STEP 5: TRACK THE TREND

- Weigh at the same time on 3 to 4 mornings a week and use the weekly average
- Add a waist measurement and progress photos every two to four weeks
- Watch gym performance. Strength holding steady is a good sign

IF PROGRESS STALLS

- Check portions of oils, nuts and snacks first
- Check weekends and drinks
- Give it two to three weeks before changing anything
- Then trim about 100 to 150 kcal or add daily steps
- Avoid drastic cuts

PROTECT MUSCLE

- Keep lifting and keep it progressive
- Hit your protein target daily
- Sleep and recover well
- Creatine is still useful in a deficit

HUNGER TOOLBOX

- Protein at every meal
- High fibre carbohydrates such as oats, beans and potatoes
- Large vegetable portions and soups
- Plan your highest calorie meal for when you are hungriest

REALISTIC PACE

Slower fat loss is easier to hold, keeps training quality higher and protects muscle. A reasonable rate is around 0.5 to 1 percent of body weight per week. Beginners with more to lose may start at the faster end.

DIET BREAKS AND MAINTENANCE

Long diets are easier with planned maintenance weeks, holidays and social meals. When you reach your goal, raise calories gradually (about 100 to 200 kcal a week) until weight settles, and keep the habits.

MOVE MORE, EASILY

- UK guidelines: 150 minutes of moderate activity a week plus strength work on two days
- Build daily steps gradually. There is no magic number
- Walk after meals, take the stairs, stand up regularly

COMMON MISTAKES

- Cutting calories too hard, too soon
- Skipping protein
- Forgetting drinks and snacks
- Doing everything perfectly Monday to Friday and giving it all back at the weekend
- Using the scale as a judge

WHO SHOULD GET INDIVIDUAL ADVICE

This chapter is general education for healthy adults. If you are under 18, pregnant or breastfeeding, have a history of disordered eating, have a medical condition or take medication, get individual professional advice. Avoid very low calorie diets without supervision.

CHAPTER: MUSCLE BUILDING

MUSCLE BUILDING

Muscle gain needs progressive training, enough protein, a small calorie surplus and time. Patience and consistency beat bulking aggressively.

+250-500 kcal	0.25-0.5%	1.6-2.0 g/kg
TYPICAL DAILY SURPLUS	BODY WEIGHT GAIN PER WEEK	DAILY PROTEIN

STEP 1: START WITH CALORIES

Estimate maintenance with the steps earlier in this guide, then add 250 to 500 kcal. For the 75 kg example that is roughly 2,880 to 3,130 kcal. Beginners can use the upper end. Slower gain means less fat gain.

STEP 2: HIT PROTEIN

Aim for 1.6 to 2.0 g per kg per day across three to five meals, roughly 0.25 to 0.4 g per kg per meal. That is about 20 to 40 g for most people.

STEP 3: TRAIN PROGRESSIVELY

- Train each muscle group about twice a week
- Aim to add reps or load over time
- Train close to failure on most working sets
- Recover well and sleep consistently

STEP 4: FUEL WITH CARBOHYDRATE

Carbohydrate supports hard training. Most of the extra calories can come from carbohydrate plus a little extra fat. Use rice, oats, potatoes, bread, pasta and fruit.

HARD TO EAT ENOUGH? START HERE

EASY CALORIE ADDS	ABOUT	PROTEIN
Banana and 20 g peanut butter	215 kcal	6 g
2 slices wholegrain bread and 20 g peanut butter	285 kcal	12 g
300 ml whole milk and 30 g whey	310 kcal	33 g
30 g almonds and a banana	275 kcal	7 g
150 g cooked rice or pasta and 10 g olive oil	295 kcal	4 g

CD/TRAINING

CHAPTER: MUSCLE BUILDING (CONTINUED)

MAKE EATING EASIER

- Use milk, smoothies and shakes for extra calories
- Choose refined carbohydrates when fibre is filling you up
- Add olive oil, nut butter and avocado
- Eat more often. Four or five eating moments help

STEP 5: MONITOR

- Weekly average body weight and gym performance
- Waist and body measurements every few weeks
- Gaining much faster than 0.5 percent a week usually means extra fat gain
- No change after two to three weeks: add about 100 to 150 kcal

KEEP IT SENSIBLE

More food does not mean unlimited muscle gain. Once you are gaining steadily, stay there. When you want to lean out, move into the fat loss chapter and keep the training going.

EVERYONE BUILDS MUSCLE

Women build muscle with the same principles. Gains are smaller in absolute terms but just as meaningful. Beginners progress fastest. Experienced lifters gain slowly, so smaller surpluses suit them best.

SLEEP AND RECOVERY

- 7 to 9 hours of sleep
- A rest day is part of the plan
- Manage stress and alcohol
- Deload weeks protect joints

SUPPLEMENTS THAT HELP

- Creatine monohydrate 3 to 5 g daily
- Protein powder when food falls short
- Vitamin D in autumn and winter if advised
- Everything else is optional

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS

Resistance training with adequate protein is the foundation. Protein supplements add a small extra benefit on average when total protein is low (Morton et al. 2018). Total daily calories, protein and training quality matter far more than meal timing tricks.

SECTION 32

FUELLING YOUR TRAINING

You do not need to eat on a stopwatch, but a little planning helps you train harder and recover better.

WHEN	GOAL	EXAMPLES
3 to 4 hours before	A normal balanced meal with carbohydrate and protein, moderate fat and fibre	Chicken and rice bowl. Oats, yoghurt and berries
1 to 2 hours before	A smaller meal or snack you digest comfortably	Toast and peanut butter. Yoghurt and banana
30 to 60 minutes before	Easily digested carbohydrate if you need it	Banana, rice cakes, a small handful of dried fruit
During (over about an hour, hard)	30 to 60 g carbohydrate per hour plus fluid	Sports drink, gels, bananas, jelly sweets
After	Protein (20 to 40 g) plus carbohydrate, then your next normal meal	Shake and banana. Chicken, rice and veg

THE ANABOLIC WINDOW, DEBUNKED

The idea that you must eat protein within 30 minutes after training is mostly a myth. Total daily protein and a protein feeding in the hours around training both matter, but the timing is flexible.

FAST REFUEL

If you train again within about four hours, the ISSN suggests up to roughly 1.2 g of carbohydrate per kg per hour for the first few hours, plus protein. Most people do not need this.

TRAINING FASTED?

It is fine if you prefer it and your session is short or easy. For long or hard sessions, a small carbohydrate snack usually helps performance. It does not burn more fat overall.

HYBRID AND ENDURANCE DAYS

- Raise carbohydrate on long or hard days
- Practise your race day fuelling in training
- Hydrate and add sodium in the heat
- Recover with carbohydrate, protein and fluid

SIMPLE VERSION

Eat a meal 2 to 4 hours before, drink water, train, then eat a meal with protein and carbohydrate within a few hours. For most people, that is enough.

SECTION 33

WOMEN, HORMONES AND ENERGY AVAILABILITY

Female physiology deserves its own page. A few key ideas help women and their coaches make smart decisions.

THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

- Weight can rise by a kilo or more around the period from water retention. It is not fat
- Some people feel hungrier or more tired in the week before a period
- Research on strict "cycle syncing" diets is limited. Listen to your body and adjust training and meals as needed
- Heavy periods can lower iron. UK adult RNI is 14.8 mg for women aged 19 to 50

LOW ENERGY AVAILABILITY (RED-S)

- Eating too little for your training can disrupt hormones, bone, immunity and mood
- Signs: missed or irregular periods, frequent injuries or stress fractures, constant fatigue, getting ill often
- Hormonal contraception can mask irregular periods
- If periods stop, speak to a GP

PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

- Folic acid 400 micrograms daily before conception and until week 12
- Vitamin D 10 micrograms daily
- Weight loss diets are not for pregnancy
- Training can continue with advice from a midwife or GP

PERIMENOPAUSE AND MENOPAUSE

- Muscle and bone loss speed up, so strength training matters
- Prioritise protein, calcium (700 mg) and vitamin D
- Sleep and stress management help
- Talk to a GP about symptoms and treatment options

FEED THE TRAINING

Women who eat enough, lift regularly and sleep well tend to feel stronger, more energetic and more in control. Under eating is not a shortcut. If you or a client suspect low energy availability, seek professional support.

SECTION 34

DIETS, TRENDS AND MYTHS

Nutrition is full of strong opinions. Here is a quick reality check on the common ones.

DIET OR CLAIM	WHAT THE EVIDENCE SAYS	VERDICT
Intermittent fasting	Works for some people because it can reduce calories. No clear advantage over other approaches when calories match. Not suitable for everyone	An option, not magic
Keto / very low carb	Can reduce appetite short term. May hurt high intensity training and is hard to sustain	Optional
Carnivore diet	No fibre and little long term evidence. Not recommended	Skip
Detox and juice cleanses	The liver and kidneys already detox. No good evidence for cleanses	Skip
Eating late makes you fat	Total intake and food choices matter more than the clock	Mostly myth
"Damaged" metabolism	Metabolism adapts a little to dieting, but it is not broken. Raise calories gradually	Mostly myth
Ultra processed food	Linked with higher intake and poorer health, but includes useful foods like wholegrain bread and yoghurt. Aim for mostly minimally processed	Nuanced
Seed oils are toxic	Replacing saturated fat with unsaturated fat supports heart health	Myth
Spot reduction	You cannot target fat loss to one area	Myth
Superfoods, apple cider vinegar	Small or no effects. Overall diet matters	Overrated
Eat every 3 hours	Meal frequency has little effect on metabolism. Pick what suits you	Optional

THE BEST DIET

The best diet is the one that meets your needs, fits your life and that you can stick to. Be curious about trends, but ask whether they are safe, sustainable and backed by evidence.

SECTION 35

BREAKFASTS AND SHAKES

Starting the day with a real protein source makes the rest of the day easier. Amounts are as eaten. Nutrition values are approximate and calculated from typical UK food data.

CDTRAINING BREAKFAST WRAP

100 g eggs | 100 g egg whites | 40 g wafer thin ham | 60 g wrap | 30 g spinach | 80 g peppers | 3 g oil

~470 kcal | P39 g | C37 g | F19 g

BERRY PROTEIN SHAKE

30 g whey | 250 g semi skimmed milk | 100 g berries | 100 g banana | 40 g oats

~520 kcal | P38 g | C70 g | F10 g

OVERNIGHT OATS

60 g oats | 200 g 0% Greek yoghurt | 150 g milk | 100 g berries | 10 g peanut butter

~500 kcal | P35 g | C61 g | F13 g

EGGS ON TOAST

100 g eggs | 150 g egg whites | 100 g wholegrain bread | 100 g tomatoes | 100 g fruit

~515 kcal | P40 g | C57 g | F14 g

GREEK YOGHURT POWER BOWL

250 g 0% Greek yoghurt | 100 g berries | 30 g oats | 10 g chia | 1 tsp honey

~355 kcal | P31 g | C44 g | F6 g

PEANUT BUTTER PROTEIN PORRIDGE

70 g oats | 300 g milk | 100 g banana | 20 g peanut butter | 20 g whey

~690 kcal | P40 g | C83 g | F22 g

MORE BREAKFAST IDEAS

Scrambled eggs and beans on toast | skyr with fruit and granola | porridge with berries | protein pancakes | smoothie with spinach and whey | overnight oats with chia.

SECTION 36

LUNCHES AND DINNERS

Each meal follows the same pattern: protein, carbohydrate, vegetables and a measured fat or sauce. Amounts are as eaten. Nutrition values are approximate.

CHICKEN AND RICE BOWL
160 g cooked chicken | 200 g cooked basmati rice | 200 g mixed vegetables | 30 g light sauce | 5 g olive oil

~645 kcal | P60 g | C74 g | F12 g

SALMON AND POTATOES
150 g cooked salmon | 300 g potatoes | 200 g green vegetables | 5 g olive oil

~635 kcal | P45 g | C59 g | F24 g

TUNA JACKET POTATO
350 g baked potato | 100 g tuna | 40 g sweetcorn | 30 g Greek yoghurt | 80 g salad

~445 kcal | P37 g | C70 g | F2 g

BEEF STIR FRY
150 g cooked lean beef | 200 g cooked rice | 250 g stir fry veg | 30 g light sauce | 5 g oil

~675 kcal | P53 g | C76 g | F17 g

CHICKEN GRAIN SALAD
150 g cooked chicken | 150 g cooked quinoa | 80 g chickpeas | 100 g salad | 40 g avocado | 5 g olive oil

~630 kcal | P60 g | C49 g | F21 g

TURKEY BEAN CHILLI (FREEZER FRIENDLY)
150 g cooked turkey | 120 g kidney beans | 200 g chopped tomatoes | 100 g peppers | 150 g cooked rice

~630 kcal | P57 g | C79 g | F9 g

MORE MEAL IDEAS
Chicken wrap | prawn and veg noodles | salmon traybake | turkey burgers and wedges | veggie curry with rice | cottage cheese and bean jacket potato.

SECTION 37

SNACKS AND MEAL BUILDER

Snacks are optional. Use them when they make the overall diet easier.

PROTEIN RICH
Greek yoghurt and berries | cottage cheese and fruit | protein shake and banana | boiled eggs and toast | tuna on toast | edamame | jerky

MORE ENERGY
Oats with milk and banana | toast with peanut butter and fruit | yoghurt with granola and berries | measured nuts and dried fruit

LIGHTER OPTIONS
Fruit | plain yoghurt | vegetable sticks with hummus | popcorn | a low calorie drink alongside a meal if preferred

PRE TRAINING
If you are hungry before training choose something you digest comfortably. Carbohydrate may be useful. Keep fat and fibre lower if that suits your digestion.

CDTRAINING MEAL BUILDER

1. **PROTEIN**
   Chicken | turkey | beef | fish | eggs | tofu
2. **CARBOHYDRATE**
   Rice | potatoes | oats | pasta | bread | fruit
3. **NON STARCHY VEG**
   Broccoli | cauliflower | spinach | peppers | green beans
4. **HEALTHY FAT**
   Olive oil | nuts | seeds | avocado
5. **FLUIDS**
   Water first | adjust for activity and heat
6. **STARCHY VEG (HIGHER CARB)**
   Potato | sweet potato | peas | corn | squash

Adjust portions to your goal, appetite, activity and individual requirements. No single meal needs to be perfect.

SNACKS WITH NUMBERS

GREEK YOGHURT AND BERRIES
200 g yoghurt, 100 g berries

~160 kcal | P21 g | C17 g | F1 g

PROTEIN SHAKE AND BANANA
30 g whey, 250 g milk, banana

~340 kcal | P33 g | C37 g | F6 g

PEANUT BUTTER TOAST
2 slices bread, 20 g peanut butter

~285 kcal | P12 g | C31 g | F13 g

COTTAGE CHEESE AND FRUIT
150 g cottage cheese, 100 g fruit

~165 kcal | P18 g | C16 g | F3 g

SECTION 38

EXAMPLE DAYS

Two worked examples built from this guide. They show how the pieces fit, not a prescription. Scale portions to your own targets.

FAT LOSS DAY (ABOUT 1,960 KCAL, 167 G PROTEIN)

MEAL	WHAT	KCAL	PROTEIN
Breakfast	Berry protein shake	520	38 g
Lunch	Tuna jacket potato	445	37 g
Snack	Greek yoghurt and berries	160	21 g
Dinner	Beef stir fry	675	53 g
Snack	Cottage cheese and fruit	165	18 g
TOTAL		**1965 kcal**	**167 g**

MUSCLE BUILDING DAY (ABOUT 2,870 KCAL, 197 G PROTEIN)

MEAL	WHAT	KCAL	PROTEIN
Breakfast	Peanut butter protein porridge	690	40 g
Lunch	Chicken and rice bowl	645	60 g
Snack	Peanut butter on toast	285	12 g
Dinner	Salmon and potatoes	635	45 g
Snack	Almonds and banana	275	7 g
Shake	Protein shake and banana	340	33 g
TOTAL		**2870 kcal**	**197 g**

MAKE IT YOURS

Swap in any meal from the Breakfasts and Lunches pages. Keep protein at each meal, and add or remove carbohydrate and fat to hit your own calories.

FLEXIBLE FOR VEGETARIANS

Use eggs, dairy, tofu, tempeh or beans in place of meat and fish. Everything else works the same.

SECTION 39

COMMON QUESTIONS

The questions clients ask again and again, answered simply.

QUESTION	SHORT ANSWER
Do I need to eat every 3 hours?	No. Meal frequency matters less than your daily totals. Eat in a pattern you enjoy and can repeat
Is eating at night bad?	No. Late eating is not magic. If it leads to extra calories, it can slow fat loss, but total intake is the driver
Do I need to eat back exercise calories?	Not always. Estimates are rough. If you are very hungry or performance drops, add a little food
How fast should I lose weight?	About 0.5 to 1 percent of body weight per week is a typical, sustainable rate
Are cheat meals okay?	A meal out is just a meal. Avoid the idea of "cheating" and plan treats as part of your diet
Is fruit bad because of sugar?	No. Whole fruit comes with fibre and nutrients. Fruit juice is different, so keep it to 150 ml a day
Do I need protein shakes?	No. They are convenient. Food can do the same job
How much water should I drink?	Around 6 to 8 glasses of fluid a day, more in heat or hard training. Pale urine is a good guide
Can I out-train a bad diet?	Rarely. Exercise helps health and body composition, but food has a large influence on weight
Why did my weight jump overnight?	Water, salt, carbohydrate and food volume. Look at the weekly average
Should I cut out carbs?	Not necessarily. Carbs fuel training. Cut calories in the way that suits you
When should I see a professional?	If you have a medical condition, take medication, are pregnant, have food allergies, or feel food is out of control

SECTION 40

WEEKLY CHECK IN TRACKER

Print this page or copy it into a notebook. Five minutes a week keeps you honest and shows your progress.

MEASURE	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	AVG
Body weight (kg)								
Steps								
Training done								
Protein target hit								
Fruit and veg portions								
Water or fluids								
Sleep (hours)								
Energy (1 to 5)								
Hunger (1 to 5)								

THIS WEEK'S WINS

WHAT WAS HARD

ONE CHANGE FOR NEXT WEEK

QUESTIONS FOR MY COACH

HOW TO USE IT

Record your numbers, then look at the weekly average rather than any single day. Use the notes to spot patterns, celebrate wins and pick just one change for next week.

SECTION 41

ACTION PLAN AND EVIDENCE

Turn the guide into a small number of behaviours you can repeat every week.

AREA	MY ACTION	HOW I WILL MEASURE IT	FREQUENCY
Protein	Include a protein source at each main meal	Daily target or meal count	Daily
Fruit and veg	Include fruit or vegetables at most meals	Portions across the day	Daily
Fibre	Add one higher fibre food	Food choice or meal pattern	Daily
Water	Carry a bottle and drink regularly	Bottle refills or routine	Daily
Training nutrition	Include carbohydrate around hard sessions when useful	Pre or post training meal	Training days
Meal prep	Prepare 2 to 4 reliable meals	Prepared portions available	Weekly
Sleep and recovery	Protect a consistent routine	Usual sleep and wake time	Daily
Weekly review	Check weekly average weight, waist and energy	Check in tracker	Weekly

SELECTED EVIDENCE AND FURTHER READING

- NHS: The Eatwell Guide and healthy eating guidance.
- NHS: Sugar guidance. Adults no more than 30 g free sugars per day.
- NHS: Fibre and healthy eating guidance. Adults around 30 g fibre per day.
- NHS: Vitamin D guidance. 10 micrograms daily in autumn and winter for adults.
- NHS: Salt. Adults no more than 6 g a day. NHS: Alcohol units guidance (UK Chief Medical Officers).
- UK Chief Medical Officers: Physical activity guidelines for adults.
- Food Standards Agency: Food safety at home, rice and leftovers, and front of pack labelling guidance.
- British Dietetic Association: Omega 3 Food Fact Sheet and other food fact sheets.
- SACN: Carbohydrates and Health report (fibre and free sugars).
- Mifflin et al. 1990. A new predictive equation for resting energy expenditure in healthy individuals. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.
- Morton et al. 2018. Protein supplementation and resistance training meta analysis. British Journal of Sports Medicine.
- Schoenfeld and Aragon 2018. How much protein can the body use in a single meal for muscle building? Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition.
- Jager et al. 2017. International Society of Sports Nutrition position stand: protein and exercise.
- Kerksick et al. 2017. International Society of Sports Nutrition position stand: nutrient timing.
- Antonio et al. 2021. Common questions and misconceptions about creatine. Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition.
- International Society of Sports Nutrition. Creatine position stand.
- Guest et al. 2021. International Society of Sports Nutrition position stand: caffeine and exercise performance.

General education only. Individual medical or dietetic advice may be required. Thanks for reading :)