

FLEXIBLE DIETING

Flexible Dieting isn't a diet. It is the assessment of the caloric needs of an individual and partitioning those calories into an appropriate range of macronutrients in order to realize the individual's goals by optimizing the body for improving body composition and performance and generally improve medically recognized markers of health. Diets end. But eating is the one thing you will do besides breathing you will do for the rest of your life. How long can you really go without a bite of cake, or a candy bar, or a doughnut, a piece of pizza, an ice cream cone, a bowl of cereal? More importantly, why would you want to resist in perpetuity? To what end? Why would you want to develop orthorexia or a generally unhealthy relationship with food? Food is supposed to make you survive and thrive and bring you joyous experiences. Food can only kill you if you let it. Flexible Dieting is a way to eat for life that allows for living. So go out there and live.

“Flexible dieting is about eating a diet you can maintain and enjoy, while keeping the body you want. Flexible dieting is not about counting calories or macronutrients. It's not about eating tons of junk food and hoping for the best. It's about finding the simplest, most effective ways to get the body you want with as little effort and anxiety as possible.”

The Basics Of Flexible Dieting for Athletes

- Flexible dieting/nutrition is an elastic method of eating that rids the use of the outdated structured meal plan you see in the fitness magazines. You get to be flexible with your eating times, your food choices, and your daily caloric intake depending on your training schedule.
- Flexible dieting has been proven to help athletes reach an array of goals from weight loss/gain to performance enhancement to inner health.
- Tracking macronutrients will improve athleticism, improve body composition, build body awareness, and educate the athlete on both rudimentary nutrition and the more advanced sports nutrition.
- There are three macronutrients: protein, carbohydrates, and fat; these macros are what yield calories. Protein and carbs each yield 4 calories per gram and fat yields 9 calories per gram.
- Food also contains micronutrients in the form of vitamins and minerals, which do not yield any calories. If your micronutrients are not being met your performance and overall health will be negatively affected. Micronutrients must take precedent, and therefore, the athlete will be unable to constantly fit highly processed food into their diet. This is why flexible dieting is not IIFYM (If It Fits Your Macros).
- There is no perfect ratio of macros that is guaranteed to yield certain results and every person is unique in how they react to protein, carbs, and fats. An initial calculation will

give you a great starting point, but from there a trial and error period will need to take place in or order for you to get in tune with your body and reach your goals. Flexible dieting is 100% customizable and adjustable to the individual.

- You do not need to hit your macros dead on every single day... think flexible. The biggest misconception with flexible dieting is that one needs to rigidly hit a specific set of macros on a daily basis and this couldn't be farther from the truth. Flexible dieting is able to remove all stressful rigidity in your diet and allow more freedom in food choices and eating out.
- There are zero food restrictions with flexible dieting; no food is off limits unless of course you have a diagnosed allergy or sensitivity to a certain food.
- Again, flexible dieting IS NOT "if it fits your macros". There will be times where you can "fit" certain foods, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you should. Be smart and eat like an athlete 90% of the time.
- Once you are able to accurately hit your calories and macros, you will be taught to implement additional nutrition tools such as carb cycling and nutrient timing.
- You are human. Thus you are going to screw up your nutrition at some point in time, its inevitable. You must teach yourself to get back on the horse and not dwell on something you can't change. The problem is when you quit caring and screw up repeatedly.

At the end of the day, if your calories and protein are closely met while consuming good quality food high in micronutrients, you did well. The whole point of this is flexibility and leniency and we never want perfect to be the enemy of the good. The more you plan, track, and measure, the easier this will become for you. The planning ahead part is usually what is the most stressful part for people but after a few weeks of practice, it will start to come easy.

Eating For Specific Goals: What You Need to Know

Overall Health: The most important thing to focus on when eating for overall health is prioritizing micronutrients over everything. Consumed minimally processed foods, have plenty of variety in your food choices (especially produce), drink plenty of water, and take minimal supplements.

Athletic Performance: The most important thing to focus on when eating for athletic performance is consuming adequate calories to support your training; carbs and protein in particular to ensure you recover from your workouts. Athletes also must get an ample amount of vitamins and minerals to keep the body performing optimally, thus micronutrients need to be monitored closely. Performance nutrition has the most flexibility and leniency as far as macros/calories consumed. No rigid structure needs to be put in place when eating for performance.

Body re-composition: The most important thing to focus on when improving body composition is finding a caloric baseline to maintain weight and consuming ample protein. Maintaining weight will happen by a calorie balance and prioritizing protein over the other macros will assist in preserving and building muscle mass. Carbs and fat may fluctuate as long as calories are being met on a daily basis. Micronutrients will play a minimal role in determining body composition, however if performance or health are secondary goals, they should still be prioritized. A semi rigid structure needs to be put in place in order to lower body fat while maintaining weight. Training is going to play a HUGE role in this and conditioning usually needs to be 5-6 days/week.

Weight Loss/Gain: The most important thing to focus on when losing or gaining weight is being at a substantial and effective caloric surplus or deficit. This number will differ from person to person and it will take trial and error to determine it. Tissue loss or gain can only transpire through calorie balance (whether its positive or negative). In order to optimize muscle mass retention or gain, protein should be prioritized and fat and carb consumption should be consistent. Macro tracking is important and a fairly rigid structure should be put into place. Micronutrients will play a minimal role in determining body composition, however if performance or health are secondary goals, they should still be prioritized.

MACRO CHEAT SHEET



WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

CUTTING

- START AT MAINTENANCE THEN SUBTRACT 100-1000KCAL
- THE SIZE OF YOUR DEFICIT DEPENDS ON YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF LEANNESS
- THE LEANER YOU ARE, THE SMALLER THE DEFICIT NEEDS TO BE

MAINTENANCE - DEFICIT = _____ = KCAL FOR YOUR CUT

PERFORMANCE

- EAT AT MAINTENANCE FOR:
- PERFORMANCE
 - BODY RECOMPOSITION

BULKING

- START WITH MAINTENANCE THEN ADD 500-1000KCAL
 - IF YOU WANT A SLOW GAIN, STAY AT THE LOWER END. IF YOU WANT BIG GAINS, GO NUTS
 - EXPECT A SMALL AMOUNT OF FAT GAIN
- MAINTENANCE + SURPLUS

_____ + _____ = _____ = KCAL FOR YOUR BULK

NOW FIND YOUR MACROS

1. DETERMINE PROTEIN

- 1 G PER LB (BETWEEN CURRENT BODYWEIGHT & LEAN BODY MASS) OR
 - 2 G PER KILO OF BODYWEIGHT
- _____ × 4 = KCAL FROM PROTEIN

2. DETERMINE FAT

- 0.4-0.5 G PER LB OF BODYWEIGHT OR
 - 1 G PER KILO OF BODYWEIGHT
- _____ × 9 = KCAL FROM FAT

3. DETERMINE CARBS

- CARBS MAKE UP THE REMAINDER OF YOUR CALORIC TOTAL
 - ADD CALORIES FROM FAT & PROTEIN
 - SUBTRACT THAT FROM YOUR TOTAL
- _____ - _____ = _____
- THIS IS YOUR KCAL FROM CARBS
- _____ ÷ 4 = _____
- THIS IS YOUR GRAMS OF CARBS

THESE ARE YOUR MACROS

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- CREATE MEAL APPROACHES THAT WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR LIFESTYLE, YOUR SCHEDULE, YOUR PREFERENCES
- HITTING YOUR PROTEIN IS MOST IMPORTANT. THERE CAN BE WIGGLE ROOM AMONGST FATS AND CARBS AS LONG AS PROTEIN AND TOTAL CALORIES ARE BEING MET
- TWEAK YOUR CARBS AND FAT IF YOU ARE CONSISTENTLY ABOVE ON ONE AND BELOW ON ANOTHER
- BE CONSISTENT FOR TWO WEEKS IN ORDER TO GAUGE HOW ACCURATE YOUR CALCULATIONS ARE. TWEAK ACCORDINGLY, IF NECESSARY
- DON'T DICK AROUND AND THEN THINK THE NUMBERS YOU AREN'T HITTING DON'T WORK
- YOU CAN'T CHEAT THE PROCESS
- IF ON A CUT, DOING TOO BIG OF A CUT WON'T ACCELERATE YOUR PROGRESS
- WEIGH YOURSELF, BUT NOT EVERY DAY. IF YOUR SCALE DOESN'T MOVE FOR TWO WEEKS, YOU ARE AT BASELINE. CUT, BULK, MAINTAIN AS YOU NEED
- RECALCULATE EVERY 6 WEEKS OR 10-15 POUNDS
- EAT. LIFT. LIVE.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Flex Dieting

1. Determine your maintenance caloric need:

your weight x lifestyle multiplier = daily caloric need

lifestyle multiplier:

11 = sedentary

12 = less than 5 hours/week

13 = 5-10 hours/week

14 = 10-15 hours/week

15 = 15-20 hours/week

16 = 20+ hours/week

*add .5 to your number if you have an active job

Adjust caloric need according to goals (see macro cheat sheet)

2. Determine macronutrient grams per day:

body weight divided by 2.2 = body weight in kg's

PRO: body wt in kg's x 2 = grams of protein per day (x 4 = daily calories from PRO)

or 1 g per pound between current weight and lean body mass

FAT: body wt in kg's = grams of fat per day (x 9 = daily calories from fat)

CHO: (total daily caloric need) - (calories from FAT+ calories from PRO) = calories from carbs
calories from carbs divided by 4 = grams of carbs per day

3. **Download MyFitnessPal** on to your phone and change your daily macros to the ones you have been given. If you are unfamiliar with the ins and outs of MFP, watch the tutorial (<https://healthyeater.com/iifym-myfitnesspal-tutorial>) and play around with the app by scanning items in and using some of the features. **Don't enter exercise in MFP, the lifestyle multiplier has already accounted for your activity level. To turn off activity tracking under the "More" button, select "Steps" then select "Don't track steps."

The app is free but you will have one set of macros that is based off a percentage opposed to exact grams. If you want exact grams, you will have to purchase the premium package for \$50. You can easily get a long with the regular app. The advantage of premium is you'll get exact macros by the gram and have multiple sets of macros in order to track properly on training days, rest days, etc.

4. The most important thing to consider when planning your nutrition is determining a practical and realistic approach. The "wing it" approach is extremely inconsistent and can be stressful, as you'll spend more time doing math and playing macro Tetris than you spend in the gym. Set 20-30 minutes aside on Sunday to get ready for the week ahead.
5. The first step is determining how many core meals (meaning full meals, not snacks) you want to eat a day; there is no right or wrong answer here. Some people do better on two

large meals a day and others do better on four. The important thing is to choose the route that will keep you both happy and consistent. You can name your meals in MFP to copy and use later.

6. Looking at your macros and number of desired core meals, start planning your meals ahead for the week. Enter what you KNOW you will eat each day. Save common meals on MFP to make this easier, this way you won't need to manually enter each day. You can copy any meal to any day. Create and save meals on Sunday night, then you can easily add them throughout the week. Know that you can tweak and adjust meals; the serving sizes aren't set in stone. For example if you save a meal in your phone that has 5 ounces of chicken in it, once you add it to a day in your food diary, you can easily change that serving size to 6 ounces if need be.
7. Create a training day menu and a rest day menu. On training days you will have pre and post workout meals containing carbs. Beyond that, consider your training time. If you training in the morning, you should consider incorporating more carbs into breakfast. If you training in the evening, you should consider incorporating more carbs into dinner. On rest days, your carb intake will be lower and fat intake will be higher. Rest days typically mean fattier cuts of meat/fish, which is something to take into account when planning for the week. Here are some basics to keep in mind:
 - Protein: Should be broken up evenly based on your meal schedule & consumed throughout the day.
 - Fat: Slowest digesting macro and keeps you satisfied the longest. Consume a bulk of your fat when you tend to get the hungriest during the day.
 - Carbs: Human gasoline. Seventy percent should be consumed around your training time. For example, "bookend" your training with roughly 35% before and 35% after. Do not overthink this guideline.
 - Fiber: Roughly 15% of your daily carbohydrate intake should come from fiber. By consuming adequate fiber, it will be virtually impossible to over consume sugar.
8. Add any supplements that you take daily in order to be accurate with micronutrients and calories (vitamins, BCAAs, protein, etc.).
9. Give your plan a once over to make sure macros and micros are met. If your micronutrients are under 100%, go back and add more produce.

HELPFUL HINTS:

- Prep some food to make life easier. For example, chopping up vegetables and making a big pot of brown rice or quinoa at the beginning of the week will make eating a lot easier. If you want to actually prep and portion your meals to keep you on track, go for it.
- Set alarms on your phone during the day if you are prone to under eating or forgetting to eat (athletes are busy people). Skipping meals is completely fine because meal timing plays a very minimal role in the grand scheme of things, however over eating at the end of the day because you forgot to eat will make most people miserable.
- If you know you will be going out to eat at any point in the week, look at the menu ahead of time and assess your options. Enter as much as possible ahead of time in order to make eating during the day easier. The more you have entered ahead of time, the easier nutrition will be. Remove the guesswork, remove the stress!
- You will almost always have “left over macros” that are unaccounted for each day after planning out your meals. This gives you options. For example, if you are hungrier than you anticipated you would be, you have some wiggle room for bigger servings. You can divvy them up between snacks throughout the day, or you can save them till the end of the day in hopes to squeeze in another meal of your liking.

Anticipated FAQ's:

What about “cheat meals or cheat days?”

Too often, a cheat meal turns into a cheat day or weekend resulting in caloric overload and an “undoing” of all the balanced/portion-controlled nutrition from days prior. Labeling meals as “cheats” also causes us to define foods as only either “good or bad.” If you are trying to fall within your macro goals and getting the micronutrients you need, you’ll find that a donut once in awhile might “fit” in but will hopefully discover that in order to properly fuel your body, you’ll need to avoid overindulging on these types of foods.

So don’t plan “cheat meals/days.” You never know when your sweet (or salt) tooth is going to kick in, so having a few treats around is usually ok. On the contrary, if you have a history of binging or you have been known to dust entire pints of Ben & Jerry’s in one sitting, it may be best to keep these items out of reach. For right now, you know yourself better than anyone, so use your best judgment in gauging your self-control.

What about eating out?

Keep in mind that it is a skill to track food when eating out. Eating out in moderation means less accuracy but this is the whole flexible part. If you don’t have a major weight loss goal, eating out is perfectly fine when you make smart choices and still exercise some portion control. You are going to have to eyeball portions and track the best you can.

What is the long term, practical plan? Will I be entering into my smartphone everything I eat for the rest of my life in order to eat well?

By logging your intake for 6 weeks, you'll begin to get a feel for what you need to eat each day. You'll find you eat similar meals and snacks day to day and will hopefully start to know when you're at least close to "hitting your macros" without logging everything you eat. You will eventually achieve "auto pilot" status where you know your body so well; you will be able to take a break from tracking and measuring. Once you have practiced for a while, you are more able to accurately estimate portions. When you see an undesirable change in weight or performance you'll know you need to return to logging exact amounts so you can get back on track.

Other than not using "blocks" to track food, how is flex dieting different than The Zone?

The Zone emphasizes each meal and snack being macronutrient balanced. With flex dieting, intake can be adjusted to accommodate schedules and optimize training. See nutrient timing details below:

- Spread protein out evenly throughout the day; it should be included in every core meal in order to ensure and maximize muscle protein synthesis.
- "Bookend" training with carbs as they are the body's preferred source of energy and will expedite recovery. Keep the "70% Rule" in mind here... if you break your carbs up right, it will be impossible for your body to store them as fat. You won't be eating enough in one sitting for your body to be able to do so; thus they will be utilized for energy and recovery.
- Fat is very satiating and slow digesting, eat a high fat meal when you tend to get the hungriest during the day or when you will go the longest before your next meal.
- Most importantly, do not overthink nutrient timing or let it add stress to your life. Nutrient timing is a tool that should only be put into place once you are able to accurately consistently track your macros and caloric intake.
- The samples included are based on a 4/day meal schedule, as most athletes tend to adhere to four meals a day. Keep in mind this are the core meals that have been mentioned and don't include snacks, "fillers", or leftover macros... that's the flexible part. In addition to the sample meals, you will have macros leftover.
- Keep in mind that the dominant macros are mentioned and there will be trace macros in every meal. Furthermore every macro counts (this is why flexible dieting is different than Zone).
- All times are flexible; these are simply examples to give you a starting point.

Example A: Early Morning Training

6am- Train 9am- P+C noon- P+F 3pm- P+F 7pm- P+C*

*The carbs before bed will be store as glycogen (not as fat) and prime you for your early morning workout.

Example B: Late Morning Training

8am- P+C 10am- Train 1pm- P+C 4pm- P+F 7pm- P+F

Example C: Midday Training

7am- P+F 10am- P+C noon- Train 3pm- P+C 7pm- P+F

Example D: Afternoon Training

8am- P+F 11am- P+F 1pm- P+C 2pm- Train 6pm- P+C

Example E: Evening Training

8am- P+F 11am- P+F 2pm- P+C 5pm- Train 8pm P+C

Example F: Nighttime Training

9am- P+F noon- P+F 3pm- P+C 7pm- P+C 9pm- Train

OR

10am- P+F

2pm- P+F

6pm- P+C

9pm- Train Midnight- P+C**

**This schedule will rely largely on preference. If you want a meal that late at night, eat one as it will do no harm. If you want to use your leftover macros to make a quick recovery shake, that works great as well. If you are someone who finishes your training and gets straight into bed, that is fine too. Again, there is no right or wrong here... the goal is consistency. This is the one training schedule where you'll find it to be difficult to bookend your training with carbs.