

# A Basic Introduction to Nutrition



First off, there is no cookie cutter, one-size-fits all approach to nutrition. Without taking into account your gender, age, height, basic metabolic rate (BMR), resting metabolic rate (RMR), thermic effect of food, body composition, daily schedule, etc someone could not tell you the ideal nutrition plan. If someone, without going over these crucial details with you, utters the words 40-40-20 or 40-30-20 RUN!!! Just because a diet works for one person doesn't mean it will work for you. With that in mind, I will do my best to give you some basic insight into nutrition and hopefully set you on the right path to reaching your health and fitness goals.

Whether your goal is to lose weight, bulk up, or just tone up, protein is crucial. One of the most common misconceptions is that protein is for gaining weight - this could not be further from the truth. Simply put, you gain weight by consuming more calories than your body burns, and you lose weight by consuming fewer calories than your body burns. Protein is essential for life. It provides building blocks for tissue, hair, skin, nails, hormones, enzymes, etc. Men bulk up because they have testosterone, not because of protein. How many times have you heard of someone who lost weight just to quickly gain it right back. Many times the reason for this is that when people lose weight they aren't losing the right weight. If you lose ten pounds, five of which are fat, that means you have also lost five pounds of muscle. So what's right? Well, first off, how much of an improvement have you made in your body fat percentage, none! You are a skinnier version of your unhealthy self. More importantly muscle is your body's furnace for burning fat. So by losing muscle you are making it harder on your body to keep the weight off. If you lose weight the proper way you will find that it is not only easier to keep the weight off, but you will even be able to take in more calories. Protein also affects how full you feel which will help you keep your total calorie consumption down. To digest protein is also metabolically expensive and diets higher in protein will lead to increased dietary induced thermogenesis, meaning your body will burn more calories while you do nothing. Muscle weighs more than fat and for this reason it is important when losing weight to concentrate on how your jeans fit and not actual weight loss because that can be deceiving.

What about carbohydrates? There are two types of carbs - simple and complex. Simple carbs such as fruit and juice supply your body with quick energy. Complex carbs such as pasta, rice, and bread supply your body with sustained or time-released energy. Carbs are your body's fuel and a low carb diet is not the key to weight loss as much as carb timing is. Carb timing is equally important for someone trying to gain weight. If you don't get enough carbs then your body is forced to produce carbs from protein, which we don't want.

Finally, we have fats. Believe it or not there are healthy fats that contribute to fighting disease, regulating hormones, maintaining healthy cholesterol levels and promoting healthy metabolic function. Society has labeled fats as something to avoid and because of this it's estimated that nearly 80% of Americans are deficient in essential fatty acids. Almost everyone should be taking a fish oil supplement.

Where do you go from here? Remember, there is no one-size-fits all diet. I'm sure you have heard that at a minimum, you should eat a meal every 3 to 4 hours. This will allow you to supply your body with adequate protein as well as keep your metabolism going. If you were to eat the same amount of calories in 3 meals as you were in 6 meals you would not get the same results. Your body is very smart and when you go extended periods of time, say 5 hours, without a meal it becomes accustomed to that and begins to store more fat. When you eat small frequent meals your body becomes much more efficient.

From there diet and nutrition becomes more individualized based on your body and goals. Keep in mind 1 lb of fat is equal to 3500 calories, so if you were to consume 500 less calories a day than your body burns you would lose one pound a week. Vice versa - in order to gain one pound a week you would want to consume 500 more calories a day more than your body burns. I hope this has provided valuable advice to those of you who are struggling to lose or gain weight.