How to Count Macros

What is a macro?
Macro is short for macronutrients. Macros include proteins, carbs and fats. Together these three macros make up your total calorie intake each day. By tracking the amount of protein, carbs and fats, along with total calories you eat each day, you can ensure that you are eating a well-balanced diet that is supporting your health and fitness goals.

Why is counting macros effective?
When you begin your journey towards improving your nutrition, you will make tremendous progress by developing basic food education and habit development, such as food selection, mindful eating practices, portion control, grocery shopping strategies, and better meal planning & preparation.

However, once you are consistently making good food choices, you will eventually reach the point where your progress stalls. In order to continue improving, you must pay more attention to the total amount of food you are eating, establish correct portion sizes for your body type, goals and activity level as well as eat the right foods at the right times of the day.

This is where counting macros comes in. By tracking your macros each day, you are developing the most important nutrition habit of all; consistency. When you know exactly how many calories, proteins, carbs, and fat you are consuming each day, you have a baseline to judge your progress off of. For instance, if you have a fat loss goal and your current macro prescription has you losing 1-2 pounds per
week, you don’t need to switch anything. On the other hand, if your current macro prescription has you not losing weight for two weeks in a row, your coach can modify your calories and where those calories are coming from in order to continue making progress. If you are not tracking what you are eating, you are simply guessing that you are on the right track and hoping for the best. (Note: Cutting calories will not always be the answer. You can only cut so much food from your diet. Other options will include improving food quality, getting more sleep, getting more daily physical activity, etc.)

Before we get into the details of counting macros, let’s explore each of them along with calories.

**Calorie Balance**

A calorie is a unit of measurement for energy. Calorie balance describes the relationship between calories taken in from the body through food and drink vs. those calories used by the body for physical activity, bodily functions and maintenance, etc. The calories entering the body through food and drink are either used immediately for energy or stored for later use in your muscles, liver or fat cells. If your calories coming in exceed the amount of energy that your body can store in the liver and muscle for energy usage later, then the excess will be stored as fat. This is no Bueno.

Manipulating calorie balance is how you can control your body weight. There are 3 sorts of calorie balance states. You can be in a 1) calorie surplus 2) calorie balance or 3) calorie deficit.

If you are in a calorie surplus, the amount of energy found in the food and drink that you are consuming is higher than that being used by your body for physical activity and body function. This excess of calories being brought into the body will lead to higher energy storage, which leads to an increase in body weight over time as well as increases in muscle mass, other lean tissues and fat mass.
If you are in a calorie balance, the amount of energy found in the food and drink that you are consuming is equal to that being used by your body for physical activity and body functions. This will lead to your body weight remaining stable over time.

If you are in a calorie deficit, the amount of energy found in the food and drink that you are consuming is lower than that being used by your body for physical activity and body function. Due to the lack of fuel being provided through food and drink, your body will use fat stores and energy stores in muscle and the liver for the energy it needs. This will lead to a decrease in body weight over time.
At this point, it is clear that calorie balance is extremely important to changing your body weight. In fact, it’s the most important factor when it comes to changing body weight. Most people in this program have the goal of dropping body fat and losing weight. That requires a calorie deficit. There is no way around it. You can create a calorie deficit by increasing the amount of calories your body uses for energy through increased exercise and physical activity and/or consuming fewer calories through food and drink than is needed by your body to fuel activity. Put simply, move more and/or eat less.

You can tell if you are in a calorie deficit by tracking your body weight consistently over time. If you are steadily losing weight each week, you are on the right track. With that being said, it is best to aim for a 1-2 pound weight loss per week unless you are very overweight. Anything more than a 1-2 pound weight loss per week will lead to your body eating away at your hard earned muscle for fuel. That is the last thing you want in the quest to look better naked and be strong and healthy. That is why there will be a day each week that you have to report your body weight as a way to identify any need to change up the diet and track progress.

In the case that you do, at some point, want to gain weight to put on muscle, the same rule of 1-2 pounds/week applies. If you gain any more than 1-2 pounds/week, you are very likely to put on a lot more fat than is healthy and it will be much harder to lean back out afterwards.
Protein

Out of the three macronutrients, protein is the most important if you are interested in looking better naked. Protein is made up of amino acids, which are considered the building blocks of life. The amino acids, found in the protein you consume, contribute to the production of enzymes, hormones, neurotransmitters, antibodies, etc. They replace worn out cells and repair and build body structures like muscle, tendons, ligaments, etc. Protein is the most important macro for body composition because your muscle is literally made of it. Consuming adequate amounts of protein in the diet will lead to the growth of muscle, but also the prevention of muscle breakdown. Both of which, are vital to looking better naked, not to mention being fit and healthy.

It is important to include a source of protein from this list in every meal that you eat. Your body uses a storage system called the amino acid pool. This pool is where your body pulls amino acids from to be used in the repair and building of muscle and other structures, transporting important substances throughout the body and producing important components involved in all kinds of processes happening in the body that affect your health. These processes are going on non-stop inside your body.

Therefore, it is important that this amino acid pool receives a steady stream of protein all throughout the day. If your body is lacking amino acids, due to inadequate protein intake, we do not function as well as we should. You can’t just have a giant steak at dinner and think that you are okay because you got all your protein in one shot. Your body needs a consistent supply of smaller doses all throughout the day. That’s why protein should be included with every meal and you should aim for about 4 meals each day separated by about 4 hours. In planning each of these meals, start first with your protein source, because it is the most important macro after all.

Examples:
- Protein Powder
- Chicken Breast
- Eggs
- Steak
- Pork
- Game (Bison, Buffalo, Elk)
- Ground Beef or Turkey (>93% lean)
- Lean Fish (Tilapia, Red Snapper, Cod, etc.)
- Salmon
- Tofu
- Tuna (Fresh or packed in water)
- Turkey Breast
- Nonfat Plain Greek Yogurt
- Low Fat Cottage Cheese

Carbs

**Whole Grains, Beans, & Legumes**

1 serving = Approximately 1/2 fist

- For large or active people, especially men, 1 serving = 1 fist
- Beans & legumes can include chickpeas, lentils, black beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, black-eyed peas, fava beans, etc.
- Whole grains ideally means whole grains – i.e. the whole, intact grain seed (rather than processed flours, breads, bagels, noodles and pasta, baked goods, etc. wherever possible).
- Whole grains can include:
  - whole or steel-cut oats
  - brown, red, or wild rice
  - quinoa, amaranth, buckwheat groats
  - whole wheat, spelt, or kamut grains
  - corn
  - millet, barley

Carbohydrates are the major source of fuel for our bodies and they can be put into two broad categories: simple carbs or complex carbs. Simple carbohydrates are simple in structure and are digested quickly and easily, leading to large spikes in blood sugar, followed by a crash soon after. Simple carbs include things like soda, breakfast cereal, pastries, baked goods, candy, coffee creamer, etc. The carbohydrates that we will recommend are digested more slowly, leading to a slower increase in blood sugar of less magnitude that also lasts longer and/or contain a lot more nutrients in the form of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, etc.

When the diet is made up of simple sugars and refined carbs that the body breaks down quickly, elevations in blood triglycerides, bad cholesterol and insulin resistance are likely. On the other hand, if the diet is made up of healthier carbs like fruits, vegetables and whole grains, they are digested slower, leading to better control of hunger, insulin response, energy levels and body composition. These
healthier carb options carry a lot more nutrients than simple sugars as well. In addition, they are much better sources of fiber than simple carbs. Fiber is very important for digestion, control of hunger and disease prevention. Women should aim for 35 grams/day and men should shoot for 48 grams/day. If you focus your diet around vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, you will likely get enough fiber.

**Role of Carbs**

Carbohydrate in the blood stream (glucose) and stored carbohydrate in the form of glycogen are the main energy sources for our muscles during high intensity exercise. Intense exercise would be considered exercise that involves lifting heavy weights, approaching muscular failure, movement that causes you to breathe very hard, etc. If glycogen levels (stored energy) are low, intense workouts will suffer. A light workout that does not involve the characteristics of an intense workout and allows you to maintain an easy pace with a lower heart rate will not require a large amount of stored carbohydrate for energy.

Carbs are also the preferred fuel source for your central nervous system. Carb intake that is too low leads to lower cognitive functioning, less motivation, less muscle recruitment, less fatigue resistance, etc. Your brain requires carbs to function properly. This is why some people on super low carb diets are so tired and cranky.

Consuming carbs in the diet leads to the refilling of glycogen stores in your muscles and liver. Low glycogen stores lead to decreases in protein synthesis, which means that failing to refuel your glycogen stores can lead to a decrease in muscle growth and even muscle loss. Glycogen is also stored in the liver, which holds a supply of stored energy ready to send to the brain whenever it needs it.

Carbs also cause the release of insulin, a hormone that is secreted by the pancreas. Insulin is secreted in proportion to the amount of carbs eaten. The more carbs you eat, the more insulin that is released and vice versa. Insulin is a very anabolic hormone, meaning that it leads to growth. This can be a good thing when the carbs you eat, along with protein, are causing the release of insulin leading to the storage of glycogen and the growth of muscle. However, if you consume too many carbs, all of that insulin that is released will lead to the storage of the excess carbs as body fat.

**Examples of Carbs** – Avoid the types of Carbs listed that your stomach doesn’t agree with

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bread</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Grain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn tortillas</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>Amaranth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grain breads</td>
<td>Apricots</td>
<td>Barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grain English muffins</td>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>Bran cereals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole grain tortillas</td>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>Kiwi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>Pears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangerines</td>
<td>Peaches</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nectarines</td>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>Plums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>Plums</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Buckwheat
Corn
Couscous
Long grain brown rice
Oatmeal (old fashioned or steel cut)
Popcorn
Quinoa
Spelt
Whole grain cereals
Wild rice

Pasta
Brown rice pasta
Whole grain pasta

Root Vegetables
Potatoes (russet, red, gold; small 1 ½" diameter)
Sweet potatoes/yams (small 2" diameter, 4" long)

Legumes
Beans (boiled or low-sodium canned)
Edamame
Lentils (boiled or low-sodium Canned)

Vegetables
Artichokes
Arugula
Asparagus

Beets
Bok Choy
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Celery
Collard greens
Cucumber
Eggplant
Endive
Green beans
Kale
Lettuce
Mixed greens
Mushrooms
Mustard greens
Okra
Onions
Peppers
Raddiachos
Radishes
Rhubarb
Romaine
Rutabaga
Snow peas
Spinach
Sprouts
Squash
Tomatoes
Turnips
Zucchini
What's the right amount?

The amount of carbs that one should eat is going to vary tremendously from person to person. A number of factors play a role in determining carb intake including your tolerance for carbohydrates, your body type, your activity level, your goals, etc.

Some people can crush carbs all day and look and feel great. Others eat a bowl of oatmeal and get super bloated. Some people are intolerant or even allergic to certain types of carbs and should avoid them altogether. So, obviously how your body responds to carbs plays a huge role in determining the right amount to eat each day.

Body type is another factor. Usually the leaner you and the more muscle you have will allow you to have a higher carb intake. On the other hand, if you are carrying a lot of body fat, it would be beneficial to eat a diet that is a little lower in carbs most of the time.

The more active you are, the more carbs your body will need to fuel your activity. If you live a sedentary lifestyle, your body requires much less carbohydrate.

Finally, your individual goals will affect your carbohydrate intake. For instance, if you are an athlete and are training hard for your sport, you will require a lot of carbs to be at your best. If you have a goal of dropping body fat, you will likely have to reduce carb intake at some point. If you are trying to put on muscle, your carb intake will be fairly high.

The scenarios are endless and the only way to really figure out what amount is best for you is to tinker with it. Start with an estimated guess and be consistent with it. Track how your body responds and make changes accordingly.

Fiber

Getting enough fiber is important for overall health and disease prevention as well as improving your digestion. If you eat a diet centered around whole foods including vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds, you will likely be getting enough fiber in your diet.

Women aim for at least 30-35 grams of fiber per day.

Men aim for at least 40-45 grams of fiber per day.

Timing

Timing of when you eat the majority of your carbs becomes important once you have been consistent in eating the appropriate amount of carbs and food in general. If you are over eating, then timing your carbs will have no effect on your body transformation goals. However, if you are consistently eating an appropriate amount of food with the right balance of protein, carbs and fats, you can begin to focus on placing most of your carbs at certain parts of the day and keeping their intake lower at other parts.

Basically, you should place the majority of your carbs around your workouts or parts of your day when you are very physically active. You should keep your carb intake much lower during parts of the day when you are inactive.

When you are going into a workout, it is beneficial to include some carbs in the meal immediately prior to your workout. Again, the amount of carbs included in the pre-workout meal will vary from person to
person, but a piece of fruit or two is usually a good starting point. This will give your body fuel for your session and prevent the crash that happens with intense exercise on a very empty stomach that happens to some people.

The meal that immediately follows a workout should be your largest meal, containing the most amounts of carbohydrates. After an intense workout, your body’s storage supply of energy (glycogen) is depleted and you can start to re-fill these energy stores through this post workout meal that is high in carbs. During this post workout period, your body soaks up carbs into the muscle like a sponge and is much less likely to store carbs as body fat. This is also the one time during the day that your body is more receptive to simple sugars. The quick digestion and absorption of these simple sugars leads to faster recovery of your muscles and replenishment of their energy stores. Although the inclusion of simple sugars is only required when your next workout is taking place on the same day. If your workout isn’t for another 24 hours or more, you don’t need to consume simple sugars in your post workout meal. Nonetheless carbs, in some form, should be included in the post workout meal and will allow you to recover from the workout you just had and prepare your body for the next one.

In contrast, when you are going through parts of your day when you are physically inactive, your body has much less need for carbs. Overeating carbs during this period will increase the chance that they will be stored as body fat instead of being stored for energy in the muscles. Thus, carb intake during periods of the day when you are inactive should be much lower and should never include simple sugars.

Summary

- Choose the overwhelming majority of your carbs from the list provided above and limit the consumption of simple sugars as much as possible.
- Be aware of how your body reacts after you eat certain types of carbs and remove the ones from your diet that make you bloated, gassy, congested, overly tired, etc.
- Base carb intake off of physical activity level and goals – If you live a very physically active lifestyle all the time, your carb intake can be higher. If you are mostly inactive, eat less carbs.
- Earn your carbs – Save your carbs for the meals immediately before and after your workout.
- Experiment to find the right amount of carbs for you based off your physical activity level, body type, tolerances, goals, etc.
- Women aim for at least 30-35 grams of fiber per day.
- Men aim for at least 40-45 grams of fiber per day.

References:


Fats

Role of Fats

Dietary fats play an important role in our nutrition. We need adequate amounts of fat to support metabolism, cell signaling, the health of body tissues, immunity, hormone production, and the absorption of many nutrients, like fat soluble vitamins. Fats can be used for energy or stored as fat and they help make up the majority of cells found in our bodies. Fat plays a role in things like blood vessel constriction, inflammation, hormone production, blood clotting, pain, brain health, and more. Balancing fat intake is important in optimizing the functioning of our entire body.

Fats are digested much slower than protein and carbs, which helps keep you feeling fuller between meals. However, you should also know that fat is the most calorically dense of the 3 macronutrients. While each gram of protein and carbs contain 4 calories, a gram of fat contains 9 calories. This makes the monitoring of portion sizes very important when dealing with food with high fat content.

Types of Fats

There are 3 main types of fats found in the diet; saturated fat, monounsaturated fat, and polyunsaturated fat.

Here are some examples of the different types of each:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fat</th>
<th>Saturated</th>
<th>Monounsaturated</th>
<th>Polyunsaturated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Examples</td>
<td>Animal fats (meat, butter, whole milk, eggs) Coconut oil Palm Oil Cacao oil</td>
<td>Olive Oil Avocados Peanuts Almonds Hazelnuts Chestnuts Macadamia nuts Pistachios</td>
<td>Omega-3 Omega-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Healthy Fats vs. Unhealthy Fats

Dietary fat is often referred to as either being a “healthy fat” or an “unhealthy fat.” But how does a food earn that distinction? Many people assume that saturated fat is an unhealthy fat, but saturated fats provide health benefits such as supporting the enhancement of good cholesterol. So, they should be included in the diet in the right balance. Instead, fats that should be considered unhealthy are the ones that are highly processed and designed to have a long shelf life.

Unhealthy fats include:

- Trans fats that are used in processed foods
- Hydrogenated fats like that in margarine, which makes a liquid and perishable fat into a solid
- Shelf-stable fat, and most shelf-stable cooking oils, like safflower oil, soybean oil, corn oil, etc.

On the flip side, healthy fats are relatively unprocessed fats from whole foods. Humans evolved on a diet consisting of animals, fruits and vegetables, and nuts and seeds. This whole food diet included saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat sources split evenly. In addition, our hunter gatherer ancestors lived on a diet with an omega-6/omega-3 ratio of around 1:1. This is an ideal ratio. Eating a diet high in omega-3 fats and lower in omega-6 fats leads to anti-inflammation, decreased blood clotting, immune system enhancement and lower risk of chronic diseases. These are the sources of fat and the balance of types of fats we should still aim for in our diet today.

These days, humans are much more likely to consume unhealthy processed fats, consume too much saturated fats and not enough monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, and have an omega-6/omega-3 ratio of up to 20:1. Items like corn oil, safflower oil and overconsumption of factory farmed meat, eggs and dairy lead to unhealthy balances of fat.

Instead, we should focus on getting an even mix of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats from whole foods like nuts, seeds (hemp, flax, chia seeds), fish, seaweed, pasture-raised/grass-fed animals/eggs/olives, avocado, coconut and cacao nibs. So, 1/3 of fat intake should come from saturated fats, 1/3 from monounsaturated, and 1/3 from polyunsaturated fats. Also, to improve your omega-6 to omega-3 ratio, supplement with 3-6 grams of fish oil each day.

How much?

The amount of fat in your diet can be manipulated quite a bit, but a good starting point could be half of your body weight in grams of fat. That number can be increased or decreased depending on what your daily goals for total calories, grams of protein and grams of carbs are, which will change depending on your body type, goals, etc. Basically, after you have set your daily goals for grams of protein and grams of carbs, the remaining total daily calories will come in the form of fat sources. As long as you are staying within your calorie goal, you will not over consume fat. However, you can under consume it. The minimum amount of fat needed by the body to function optimally is roughly 10% of your body weight.
weight in grams of fat per day. For instance, a 150 pound person should not consume less than 15 grams of fat per day.

If you are unable to weigh and measure your food, use your thumb to estimate portion sizes of fat sources such as:

- Nuts (e.g. almonds, walnuts, cashews, etc.)
- Nut butters (e.g. almond butter)
- Seeds (e.g. pumpkin seeds, hemp seeds, chia seeds, etc.)
- Olives and extra-virgin olive oil
- Avocado
- Butter
- Coconut, coconut milk, coconut oil
- Cold-pressed oils such as hemp, pumpkin seed, flax, or walnut oil
- Fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel

A woman’s serving size for healthy fats is going to be roughly equal to the size of her thumb. For large or active people and for most men, one serving is going to equal the size of two thumbs.

**When should I eat it?**

Meals that are higher in fat should not be eaten around a high intensity workout. The high fat content will slow digestion and immediately before and immediately after your workouts is actually an instance where consuming quickly digestible food is beneficial. It provides energy for hard training sessions and
decreases the recovery time afterward. Don’t stress if your pre and post workout meals have a little fat in them, just try to fit the majority of your fat intake into the meals that are furthest away from your workouts.

Summary

- Consume mostly whole foods as your fat sources.
- Avoid unhealthy processed fats like trans fats, hydrogenated fats, and shelf-stable fats and oils
- Split fat intake into 1/3 saturated, 1/3 monounsaturated and 1/3 polyunsaturated with most of your polyunsaturated fat coming from omega-3 sources
- Use your thumb to estimate portion sizes of fat sources
- Supplement with 3-6 grams of fish oil per day
- Eat the majority of your fat sources in the meals furthest away from your intense workouts

References


How to Track

To get started tracking your macros, you will need a food scale, some measuring cups and a lot of patience at first. Your coach will prescribe you set amounts of macros for you to hit each day. For example, your prescription could be 2075 cals / 150g protein / 200g carbs / 75g fat / 35g Fiber.

You will then accurately weigh and measure all of the food you eat throughout the day and track it in an app called My Fitness Pal. My Fitness Pal will keep a running total of the amounts of calories, protein, carbs, fat and fiber that you have eaten that day. Because you now know which foods are good sources of proteins, carbs, and fats, you can create meals that will get you as close to your macro prescription as possible.

It is important to start by weighing and measuring everything. This will help you to build consistency and over time you will be able to eye ball what 4 oz. of chicken, 1 cup of rice and 2 cups of broccoli looks like. At this point, you can begin to use the scale less often, but it is always good to come back to weighing and measuring, because it’s very easy to turn 2 tablespoons of peanut butter into four.

In order to prevent over shooting your macro daily goals, it is best to plan your meals one day in advance. That way you are not winging it throughout the day and you have a much better chance of hitting your goals for your daily macros. Using my previous example, I would plan my meals and tweak them as necessary to get as close to my macro goals as possible.
**Daily Goals:** 2075 cals / 150g Protein / 200g Carbs / 75g fat / 35g Fiber

**My Meals**

For breakfast:
- 4 oz. Broccoli
- 2 slices Bacon
- 4 Eggs
- 1 Apple

For Lunch:
- 1 cup Nonfat Plain Greek Yogurt
- 1 scoop Protein Powder
- 2 tablespoons Peanut butter
- 1 cup Frozen Berries

Snack:
- 1 White Chocolate Macadamia Nut Clif Bar

For Dinner:
- 6 oz. Chicken Breasts
- 1 container Dole Ready Salad Mix
- 2 cups Sweet Potato

**Daily Totals from My Meals after logging them in My Fitness Pal:**

2086 Cals / 147g Protein / 200g Carbs / 74g Fat / 34g Fiber

I started planning this day with an idea of what I was going to eat, but in order to come close to my goals, I had to tweak the portion sizes, add/remove foods, add a snack, etc. For instance, I was originally low on my fat, so I added more whole eggs. I was shy on protein, so I added another couple ounces of chicken breasts. I was over on carbs, so I removed some of the more carb dense foods and replaced them with fruit.

For a video tutorial demonstrating how to use My Fitness Pal, click here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu9RKqlmD1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu9RKqlmD1Q)

**Determining Meal Frequency**

In my example, I used a 3 meal/day template, but you should use whatever works best for you. If you do best with 5 smaller meals, do that. If you prefer to have 3 square meals, stick with that. As long as you are hitting your goal macros, it won’t make a huge difference. However, there are a few things to keep in mind when forming your meals.

1) Include a source of protein with every meal/snack. You should distribute your protein evenly throughout your day. Your body needs a consistent source of protein throughout the day to run optimally. If your goal is 150g of protein for the day, it is much better to split it up into 30g of
protein at 5 different meals than it is to get the majority of your protein at one meal. For more on this, read the protein section above.

2) Try to consume the majority of your carbs immediately before and after your workouts. It is during this time that your body needs those carbs to fuel and recover from your hard training sessions. During periods of the day when you are less active, you should eat fewer carbs and increase the fats included in that meal. Following this template will increase the likelihood that the carbs in your diet are used for fuel and not stored as fat.

An example day could look like this:

- Breakfast – Protein + Fats
- Lunch – Protein + Fats
- Pre-Workout Snack – Protein + Carbs
- Dinner (Post Workout Meal) – Protein + Carbs

Again, the most important thing is to hit your macro goals for the day, but once you are doing that on a consistent basis, timing your carbs can be beneficial.

Tips for Eating Out

Eating out at a restaurant can be scary when you are trying to watch what you eat because you don’t have control over the ingredients, the menu, etc. However there are some strategies you can use to still enjoy the social aspect of eating out while still making progress toward your goals. Here are my top tips for eating at a restaurant.
Monitor your portion sizes. Restaurants will often serve way more food than you actually need to be satisfied. This usually leads to overeating. To prevent this, use your hand to determine the portion sizes of your food. A portion of protein is equal to the size of the palm of your hand. A portion of fruits or vegetables is equal to the size of your fist. A portion of starch carbs, (like potatoes or pasta) is equal to the size of half of your fist. And a source of fat (like dressing, oil, seeds, avocado) is equal to the size of your thumb.

After you have determined your portion sizes of your meal, save the leftovers for later. Have your server bring you a to-go box and eat the leftovers tomorrow. It is helpful to remember that you don’t have to eat the entire meal in one sitting, especially when the restaurant’s portions are so large. If you have a tendency to eat everything on the plate, even if you are stuffed afterward, have the server bring you half of the meal and leave the other half in a to-go box that you can take with you when you leave.

Drink lots of water. Add lemon for flavor. Avoid excessive liquid calories that come from soda, alcohol, sweetened teas, etc. If you do drink something other than water, use a glass that is 16 oz. or less.

Look up the menu and plan ahead. See if the nutrition facts for each menu item are posted on the restaurant’s website or try plugging it into the My Fitness Pal app. This will help you get an idea of how many calories and grams of protein, carbs and fats are included with each item on the menu.

Ask your server to have the cook make small changes to how he normally cooks the meal. Have your meat grilled, rather than fried, cook with olive oil instead of vegetable oil or butter, replace starchy sides like fries for a side salad, have your dressing, butter or sauce served on the side, remove the bun from your burger, etc.

Remove the bread/chip basket from the table.

If you are eating at a buffet, use a smaller plate that is no larger than 9-10 inches in diameter.

Base your meal around a high quality source of protein and vegetables. This is usually your safest bet. Limit your intake of high calorie/carb/fat options like pizza, pasta, nachos, etc.

My final tip is probably the most important. You can’t always control what is served to you at a restaurant and you have to live a little every now and then. After all, a life without pizza is not a life well lived.

However, you can still enjoy the “not so clean” foods and prevent yourself from doing too much damage to your body composition goals by eating slowly and stopping when you are 80% full. To help yourself eat slowly, put your fork down between bites. Relax and breathe. Take a few moments before picking your fork up again. Try to make the meal last at least 15 minutes, while eventually working your way up to 20 or 30 minutes. Chew your food a few more times than you think you need to. Enjoy and savor each bite. Eat mindfully without distractions like your phone or TV.
In addition to eating slowly, you want to stop eating when you are 80% full. The goal is to eat until you are just satisfied or no longer hungry. This may be hard to quantify at first, but take the time to get in tune with your body and listen for your hunger and fullness signals. This will prevent you from over eating and feeling stuffed, bloated, etc. after a meal.

**Conclusion**

This macro based approach is not about becoming neurotic and obsessing over your food. In fact, it allows you to have a freedom with your food selection. As long as you are hitting your goal macro amounts, it is perfectly fine to indulge every once in a while in some “not so clean foods.” This will allow you to still occasionally enjoy the foods you love while still making progress toward your goals.

The macro based approach is meant to teach you a simple, effective way to get the body you want. We don’t want you to have to rely on this service forever. Eventually, you will learn how to modify your diet on your own and you won’t need this program anymore. You will be able to eye ball portion sizes, so you won’t have to constantly weigh and measure everything. Finally, you will learn what types of foods and in what amounts your body responds best to and take control over your diet.