

## Nutrition Challenge Update: Week 2

01/21/2022

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Challengers,

Today kicks off our 2nd week of the challenge.

Our focus this week is consistency at our maintenance levels. If you struggled with hitting your quantities last week, work on making small adjustments this week to inch closer to your true maintenance level - That means as close you can to your prescribed macros if weighing and measuring, or as close as you can to the full hand servings or plate servings if using the hand or plate method.

Also, we hope you made time for healthy shopping and food prep this past weekend so that you're set-up for success this week. Ingraining this habit will likely make the biggest difference to your health and performance in the long run. Make time, get it done, and focus on simplicity early on. Once you have the basic habit down, start layering in some more variety by prepping maybe one new item each week, but sticking mostly to your go-to options.

After this week, you may want to make some adjustments to your intake. Read below for a guide on how to decrease or increase your calories **starting Monday, 1/31.**

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### Increasing / Decreasing Calories

We're starting the challenge with a short maintenance phase (2 weeks). Having periods of maintenance gives your body the best environment, and the best opportunity to gain muscle and/or lose fat. An ideal maintenance phase would be longer than 2 weeks, but we want you to learn how to increase or decrease calories when you're looking to gain muscle or lose body fat, so we'll transition to our "cut" or "gain" phase starting next week.

***\*If you're feeling good, performing well, recovering well, and you feel like body composition is trending in the right direction, you don't have to decrease or increase calories on Monday. Keep your maintenance quantities going until you feel like progress has slowed or stalled. If progress is not trending in the direction you want, make the adjustments outlined below.***

Keep your intake consistent for the remainder of this week. Then starting Monday, 1/31, decrease calories if fat loss is your primary goal, and increase calories if muscle gain is your goal.

Here's how to do it based on the method you're using:

#### Weigh & Measure

- If fat loss is your goal, decrease daily calories by 10%
- If muscle gain is your goal, increase daily calories by 10%

- Keep protein levels the same. Decrease or increase carbs and fat equally.

Here's an example of an individual whose maintenance level is 2000 cal / day, and their goal is to lose fat:

- 2,000 cal \* 10% = 200 cal
- So reduce carbs by 100 cal, and reduce fat by 100 cal
- Carbs have 4 cal per gram. Fat has 9 cal per gram.
- $100 / 4 = 25\text{g}$  carbs, and  $100 / 9 = 11\text{g}$  fat.

The person in this example would **reduce** their daily carb intake by 25g, and their fat intake by 11g. If muscle gain was their goal, they would do the same math, but **add** 25g of carbs and 11g of fat to their daily intake.

### Hand Method

If you're using the hand method. Reduce or increase daily intake by  $\frac{1}{2}$  meal.

- Females - Reduce (for fat loss) or increase (for muscle gain) by  $\frac{1}{2}$  palm protein,  $\frac{1}{2}$  hand carbs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  fist veggies,  $\frac{1}{2}$  thumb fat.
- Males - Reduce (for fat loss) or increase (for muscle gain) by 1 palm protein, 1 hand carbs, 1 fist veggies, 1 thumb fat.

### Plate Method

Adjustments with this method are the least exact, but flexibility and ease of use are the bigger benefits here. Here are a few things to try:

- Keep protein consistent (don't change quantity), and cover a smaller portion of your plate with starchy carbs and fat. Veggie quantity can remain the same because the caloric load is very low.
- Start using smaller plates or bowls for fat loss. Bigger plates for muscle gain.
- Remove (for fat loss) or add (for muscle gain) a snack at some point of the day.

### Regardless of method...

The goal with any of these methods is to have consistency with full maintenance levels for some period of time, and then to decrease or increase your intake by a small amount (typically 200-300 calories). Consistency is still key. This will put you at enough of a caloric deficit (for fat loss) so that you maintain most of your lean tissue while still losing fat.

If you reduce calories too quickly, or by too much, you'll still lose fat, but you'll start losing muscle as well. Also, your metabolism will trend to the severe deficit more quickly - leading to a quicker plateau.

The same holds true for muscle gain. Too big of an increase will add muscle, but it will likely put on fat at a quicker rate than desired. A caloric surplus is what the body needs to build muscle, but the goal is to operate at a slight surplus so that most of those calories are converted into muscle and not fat.

After making your first adjustment on Monday (1/31), **stay as consistent as you can with that new level for at least another two weeks.** If progress is continuing in the right direction, don't make an adjustment again

until progress slows or stalls out. When it does stall, decrease (for fat loss) or increase calories (for muscle gain) by another 10%.

Rinse and repeat until you've hit your desired goal / body composition, or until you feel like your body has stalled out and just won't lose or gain anymore. At this point, transition back to your maintenance level for a period of time.

For most people, periods of loss or gain work best in roughly 8-12 week cycles, followed by 6-8 weeks of maintenance.

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## Measuring Progress

In order to make adjustments to your intake, it's smart to have methods to measure your progress.

- If you have a good relationship with the scale. Weighing yourself twice a week (non-consecutive days at consistent times) is a great way to get some objective feedback. You'll see some variance from one weigh-in to the next (mostly from body water). The goal is to look at the trend over a couple weeks (or more) of weigh-ins. This is why it's also important to have a method for logging weight - notebook or spreadsheet.
  - The scale isn't the only way to track progress. Also take into account how well clothes are fitting, how well you perform in workouts, and how quickly you recover.
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This challenge we want everyone to get a better understanding of the **amount** of nutrients their body needs to function optimally - in the long run.

You can crash diet or become highly restrictive in order to lose a few quick pounds, but these approaches don't do much toward building a strong functional body, nor toward significant and lasting changes to body composition.

The trick is finding the method that will keep you the most consistent, and knowing when to increase or decrease your intake levels.

We don't expect anyone to achieve perfection during the challenge, but we want you to get a better understanding of how quantity plays into your health, performance, and body composition.

Stay up to date with your checklists, stay consistent with your workouts, drink lots of water, and get lots of steps.

Lastly if you need to go back and review anything, or if you've missed anything leading up to this point of the challenge. Check-out our [Challenge Resource Page](#) for all of our previous content.