

## Nutrition Challenge Update: Week 3

01/31/2022

This kicks off week 3 of our challenge. Hopefully, you've been hitting your full maintenance levels, or working closer and closer to your maintenance level over these first 2 weeks.

As mentioned in last week's update, this week is when you'll decrease calories (for fat loss) or increase calories (for muscle gain) IF you feel like you're not already trending in the right direction.

*\*Depending on your training age, and what your diet looked like leading into the challenge, it's not uncommon for the body to "recomposition" when you start fueling your body more adequately (gain muscle and lose fat concurrently). If you feel strong, well-fed, you're recovering well, and if body composition is trending in the right direction, keep your intake levels as-is.*

[Here's a link to last week's update with details on how to decrease or increase your caloric intake.](#)

Eating during the challenge should require thought and effort. We're trying to instill a better understanding of what it takes to properly fuel your body, and we're attempting to engrain new practices and habits around your eating.

Weighing and measuring your food will give you the most precision and the best results. That said, you have to find a balance between your goals and the level of effort you're willing to consistently put toward your nutrition.

The takeaway here is that you don't need to always weigh and measure, or be overly obsessive with the hand method or plate method. So if the style of eating you chose for the challenge feels difficult or daunting remember these things:

- Most people will greatly improve their health, performance, and body composition by being consistent with nutrition basics - Eat a diet that is minimally processed, high in lean protein, and include plenty of veggies, fruit, whole grains, healthy oils (olive, avocado, etc), nuts and seeds, and even dairy.
- Focus on eating a lot of the right things (whole foods) so that you adequately fuel your body, and less about being overly restrictive or eating a super-low calorie diet.
- Periods of loss or gain require more effort and attention, but shouldn't last more than 8-12 weeks, and they should be followed by periods of maintenance. Also, during those maintenance periods, it's actually good to be a little more relaxed with your nutrition to give yourself some headspace.

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### What's a good rate of fat loss or muscle gain?

Fad diets often make fantastic claims like... "Lose 15 lbs in 30 days!"... "Cut 10 lbs with this 10 day juice cleanse!"... and so on. These claims and approaches fall short in several ways:

- Rates of loss greater than 1-2 lbs a week often result in significant muscle loss as well

- They require such a caloric deficit that your metabolism slows much quicker, causing you to plateau more quickly.
- In instances of cleanses and fasts, you're likely losing mostly water weight, so your fat levels remain mostly the same, and your body returns to its original weight within a few days of ending the cleanse.
- Evidence shows that dieters who lose more than 1% of body weight per week are much more likely to return to their pre-diet weight after a period of loss.

The best recommendation we've found **for healthy and consistent weight loss (that you're likely to keep off) is 0.5% to 1% of body weight per week**. You can do the math for your specific body weight, but here are a few examples of safe loss at different body weights:

- 100lb person = 0.5 - 1lb per week
- 150lb person = 0.8 - 1.5 lbs per week
- 200 lb person = 1 - 2 lbs per week

Muscle gain tends to take longer than fat loss. If you're newer to training or dieting, muscle gain often happens quicker. If you've been training and working on your nutrition for a few years, gaining muscle is more hard-fought. Here's a chart from Precision Nutrition showing realistic rates of muscle gain:

## Realistic rates of muscle gain per month

Fitness level	Men	Women
Beginner	1-1.5% body weight ~1.5-2.5 lb	0.5-0.75% body weight ~0.65-1 lb
Intermediate	0.5-0.75% body weight ~0.75-1.25 lb	0.25-0.375% body weight ~0.325-0.5 lb
Advanced	0.25-0.375% body weight ~0.375-0.625 lb	0.125-0.1875% body weight ~0.1625-0.25 lb

Everyone is different. Gender, genetics, and age all play a role in fat loss or muscle gain. The lesson here is small and consistent loss or gain leads to more lasting results.

Lastly a reminder to keep up with your challenge basics:

- Day-to-day checklist upkeep
- Hydrate well! At least ½ your body weight in ounces of water per day. All other liquids are in addition.
- Hit your sleep goals! Here are a few tips for deep and restorative sleep:
  - Keep your bedroom cool and totally dark.
  - Avoid screen time as much as possible 30-60min before bed.
  - Keep consistent sleep and wake times to help with your body's internal clock.
  - End any alcohol consumption a few hours before bed. Alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but wrecks your sleep quality.
- Keep getting as close to 10k steps a day as you can.
- Resistance train at least 3 days per week.

If you've missed anything up to this point of the challenge all of the documents we've shared can be found at our [Challenge Resources Page](#). We added our updates from prior weeks at the bottom of the page as well.

Keep at it, and let us know if you have any questions!