

Nutrition Challenge Update: Week 4

02/07/2022

We've reached our challenge midpoint. Three weeks behind us, and three weeks to go. To kick off this week, we want you to do some evaluation, and identify the biggest gaps or hurdles in your diet (or other challenge checklist items) up to this point.

- Where are you consistently falling short?
- What's the 1 or 2 things you could change that would make the biggest improvement?
- What can you reasonably change and stick to with some consistency?

My biggest gaps up to this point have been hydration, carb sources, and sleep.

Hydration is an easy fix. I just need to be more diligent about drinking lots of water first thing in the morning, and I need to take a minute or two to refill my water bottle and chug a good amount before coaching classes or 1-on-1s.

When it comes to **carb sources**, I've been eating more processed carbs than I'd like. My activity level is decently high, so it's a challenge to reach my carb requirements most days, but bread, wraps, and cereals have accounted for more of my carbs than they should. We try to buy healthier options with fewer ingredients, but processed is processed, and I know I'd do better with more fruits, starchy vegetables, and whole grains. These items are already in my diet most days, I just need to be more diligent about adding more variety.

Sleep is the hardest change for me, but would probably make the biggest difference for my health. We have a 4 year old, 2 year old, and newborn at home, and I'm at the gym early most mornings, but there are still some things I could do to get to bed earlier.

The three items above are where I'll set my focus this week. Identify your biggest gaps and put some work toward improving those.

Leaving Room for More Calorie / Macro Adjustments

We've had a handful of challengers who already decreased their macronutrients by 20% or more. They felt like their maintenance level was a lot, and/or thought they needed to be more aggressive with their adjustments to help lose fat.

We'd recommend sticking with no more than a 10% adjustment because you need to leave room for more adjustments.

If you adjusted calories last week. Stick with your new level for the rest of this week (at least 2 weeks total). If you're making progress at your desired rate, then keep the same calorie level until your progress slows.

If you feel like progress has already started to slow, adjust up or down again by 10% at the beginning of **next week**. We recommend giving yourself a minimum of 2 weeks at a given intake level before you adjust again.

After adjusting your intake 2-3 times during the course of a diet, your daily calories end-up at the low end (for loss) or high end (for gain) of what's healthy for your body. In the case of fat loss, you'll start sacrificing lean tissue, and for muscle gain, your body will convert the overabundance of calories to fat.

Here's an example of what calorie reductions during the challenge might look like for an active person with an ideal body weight of 138#:

Phase	Approx Length	Daily Calories	P	C	F
Maintenance	2 weeks	2200	138	248	73
Cut 1	2 weeks	1980	138	220	61
Cut 2	2 weeks	1782	138	195	50
Cut 3	2 weeks	1604	138	173	40

Their protein remains at 138 throughout the challenge, but carbs and fat fall by 10% every two weeks. Once their **fat intake starts to drop below 0.3 grams per pound of body weight**, that's where they should stop their reductions - 0.3 grams per pound is the minimum amount of dietary fat recommended for healthy hormone function.

You don't have to make adjustments every 2 weeks. This is just an example. Some people may get through an 8 week diet with only 1 or 2 adjustments up or down. Adjustments should only be made when progress starts to slow. You shouldn't be addicted to the scale, but this where consistently tracking your weight comes in handy.

After the challenge, you shouldn't stop your diet, we'd recommend extending your diet to at least 8 weeks, but no more than 12.

Then when your diet ends, return to your maintenance level for 6-8 weeks before trying to gain or lose again.

**We'll give more direction on setting new maintenance levels in our final weekly update.*

Eat Dense Carbs Post-Workout

We mentioned it during the challenge presentation, but wanted to reiterate that your post workout meal should be your highest carb meal of the day. While a piece of fruit with your protein shake may give you a small dose of carbs, you likely need more.

As an example, my total daily carb intake on training days is 320 grams. While most of my meals range between 45 and 55 grams of carbohydrate, I eat 110 grams in my post workout meal.

After high intensity exercise coupled with resistance training, your body needs a much bigger dose of carbohydrate to help replenish muscle glycogen, and to help with recovery.

So as a general rule, **your post workout meal should contain approximately double the amount of carbohydrate as your regular meals.**

This many carbs can require a lot of food volume, so we recommend reaching for dense carbs post workout. This means starchy and sometimes even sugary carbs without a ton of fiber.*

**Fiber offsets carb digestion. Ever hear the term “net carbs”? This is total grams of carbs in food minus grams of fiber, which gives the true carb load.*

Post workout is the one time of day that sugary carbs may be okay as well. You don't want to go overboard, but your body will not see the same insulin spike as it would during other meals since it's using the simple carbs to quickly replenish muscle glycogen.

Things like rice and potatoes are good dense options to include in your post workout meal, and if you're not able to eat a full meal, try mixing a protein shake with fruit juice, or having a smoothie with lots of fruit and maybe even some honey.

Quick aside: I'm testing out cream of rice mixed with cocoa, honey, and a little salt as part of my post-workout meals this week.

Remember, you still need your regular dose of protein and a little fat in your post workout meals as well, but as you dial-in your daily intake, remember to get a big serving of dense carbs within an hour after your workouts.

We'll keep layering in new info each week, but fall back on simplicity and consistency if things start to get confusing, or if you feel like you're falling off the wagon.

Eat mostly whole foods, and get protein, carbs, and fat at every meal.

[Here's the link to our challenge resources page if you missed any content up to this point.](#)