

KEEP TO THE BASICS



# Keep to the Basics

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When it comes to general fitness and nutrition a lot of people are confused.

And I understand why.

There's a great deal of information out there that is very easy to stumble upon and unfortunately much of that information is false or can be misleading.

There are so many diets and exercise programs that it can be difficult to distinguish what works and what doesn't.

Because of this it is easy to be confused. We don't really know where to start, and therefore we remain stuck.

We have the desire to get in better shape, we want to lose weight, we want to become stronger, but we just simply don't know where to begin.

So we get stuck looking up all kinds of things on the internet trying to distinguish what will work best for us, all of which ultimately leads to nowhere.

The idea I'm presenting in this article is not that of any special diet or following any specific workout plan but rather stick to the basics of exercise programming and dieting.

There's no sense in over-complicating things.

Especially when we're new, we need to make sure that we are sticking to the very basics.

We need to be eating foods that are good for us, foods that supplies with the necessary macronutrients we need in order to fuel not only our workouts, but also our days.

We need to keep from getting stuck in these diet plants that promise results in absurd amounts of time.

Yes we may see results, but not only do they wreak havoc on our health, we often gain the weight right back plus more when we go off those diets.

We need to find a training program that's suited for our lifestyle.

There is no magic program, there's no perfect program.

What's most important is the effort that you put into it. Any program can work if you put the effort into it.

The important thing about your exercise program itself is that it is something that you will actually do.

If you enjoy lifting weights, then lift weights.

If you enjoy running or biking, then run or bike.

The thing to remember with all of this is that we have to start somewhere. We have to start with the basics.

Making sure to keep our training and our diet simple keeps us interested. It gets us the results we were looking for, and keeps us from giving up on it.

Stick to the basics, they will get you where you want to go.

# Basic Nutrition

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*In this article “diet” refers to the eating habits in general. Not specifically to losing weight.*

Determining a proper diet can be one of the most confusing aspects of getting healthier.

This is because there are so many different options and so many people expressing what they feel is best.

Constantly surrounded by all these different meal plans and diet strategies, it can be easy to misunderstand or misinterpret what really works.

With all the information that can be found on the internet, television, and people we know personally sharing their opinions, it can be very difficult to know where to even start.

In my opinion, it is best to just simply start with the basics.

The following article has been written as a way to kind of gloss over the basic principles of instilling a proper diet.

In my opinion our diet should be something that we can stick to all the time. It is not something that we adhere to for a few weeks or few months in order to meet some short-term goal.

The proper diet is that of one that you can stick to day in and day out.

As an example, if you set yourself a goal of losing 20lbs and you decide to try some crash diet to lose the weight, you will most likely have to follow a plan in which you have to be very strict with what you eat, as well as be in a caloric deficit much too low for you to sustain.

Yes, you may lose the weight you are wanting to, however, as soon as you go off all the restrictions you will inevitably gain the weight you lost back, if not more.

This is because the way in which you lost the weight cannot be sustained.

Below are three principles I feel are important when implementing a proper nutritional diet.

## **1. Real Foods**

First and foremost it is best to focus on real foods.

Food that are minimally processed and you are able to prepare yourself. If you go to the grocery store you are faced with an array of options. Most of which are processed garbage that are food products more than anything else.

They may have at one time have been real foods, but now they have been broken down and flooded with all kinds of additives, dyes, preservatives, and chemicals.

I don't know about you, but for me these things are not food.

Real foods are those which you can look at it and tell what it or its ingredients were in its prior state.

A great example of this everybody is familiar with is chicken. A chicken breast or leg looks like it came from an actual chicken, however if you looked at a chicken nugget and did not know what it was, you would never be able to guess that it has anything to do with a chicken.

I'm not saying that you have to avoid all processed foods and you can't ever eat any of it, but what I am saying is you should try to limit the amount of processed foods that you eat.

Yes I occasionally drink pop, or soda for those outside of the Midwest, I do eat ice cream, and I have been known to have pizza (a favorite of mine ☺). But I do my best to keep my diet comprised mostly of real foods. (Tonight's dinner is pork tacos and roasted potatoes, YUM!)

## **2. How much to eat**

Another big misconception is portion sizes and how much you should or should not be eating in order to meet your goals.

A lot of people feel that if they want to lose weight they have to drastically cut their caloric intake down.

Because of this, they cut their intake too much and do not see the lasting results that they are hoping for (see example above).

Most people need to consume on average 1800 to 2200 calories per day.

When you start tracking your caloric intake this number can seem either high or low depending on upon your current diet. For example if you currently eat pretty clean, that is eating real foods, then this number could seem kind of high.

However if you are somebody that consumes a lot of processed junk foods, fast foods, and/or eating out at restaurants all the time, then sticking to this kind of a caloric range could potentially be difficult.

The best way to know exactly how many calories you should eat is by figuring out what your maintenance level is an adjusting from there.

The term “maintenance calories” refers to the number of calories that you need to be eating on average each day in order to maintain your current weight.

There are different ways of determining how many calories you should eat.

1. **Online Calculators:** There are all kinds of online calculators where you simply put in your height and weight and level of activity and it calculates a number for you.
2. **Multiplier:** Or alternatively your weight and multiply it by 12 or 13. This too will give you a rough estimate of what you are maintenance calories are.
3. **Tracking:** The most accurate way to determine your maintenance calories is to track what you eat for 1 to 2 weeks. During this time do not change your eating habits, just eat as you normally would, then you simply add up each day and divided by the total number of days

that you tracked. This will give you an average daily intake and the most accurate number for your maintenance calories.

With this information you can then add or subtract calories based on your current goals.

### **3. Put emphasis on protein**

When it comes to the separate nutrients' they are split up into macronutrients and micronutrients.

For the sake of time I will go into these in a separate article some other time since doing so now wouldn't take this article much longer than it's already going to be.

Looking at a basic diet plan we mostly only want to look at the macronutrients: carbohydrates, fats, and proteins.

If you are just starting out or simply want to stick to the basics, then I encourage you to put most of your focus on your protein intake.

This is because most people consume less protein than what would be optimal.

For most people to continue to see positive results from their diet and their exercise plan they should be consuming anywhere from .8 to 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight.

My suggestion is if you are just starting to track your food intake to start with .8 pound of body weight.

Trust me this will be more than what you think.

At this stage I would not be too concerned about your overall carbohydrate and fat intake.

Just make sure you are getting enough protein and sticking within your caloric range.

# Exercise Made Simple

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*Before I begin, as a disclaimer, I would like to inform you that I speak from the platform of training for strength and performance.*

*What I mean by this, is that a lot of things that I will talk about in this article are in reference to training with weights.*

*There will be future articles that will discuss other ways of training.*

Beginning an exercise program or starting to exercise itself can be very daunting.

Much like looking at basic diet and nutrition, when it comes to exercise programs there are a great deal of options available.

And if you do not know where to start it can become very overwhelming very quickly.

What I will explain in this article is what I feel are most important when it comes to picking a training program

First of all I would like it to be known that my focus in any program that I create is that of developing physical strength, increasing overall performance.

I feel that everyone can benefit from becoming stronger. And when I reference increasing performance this is not directly mean performance from an athlete's point of view, but also in terms of everyday life.

As we become stronger we become more confident in ourselves, which leads to increased self-esteem and a more positive view of who we are.

Because of this self-confidence, we are able to do better in school or at work.



Because we are physically stronger we are more resistant to injury. This is why I feel it is important for us to continue lifting weights well into our old age.

Strength does not discriminate, absolutely anybody can become stronger and more physically fit.

So, with that in mind, let's take a look at what I feel are most important components of any good weight training program.

## **1. Using compound movements over isolation movements**

This is one that you will hear me harp on a lot.

When it comes to lifting weights most all exercises fit into one of two categories, compound exercises and isolation exercises.

A compound exercises is one which utilizes many muscle groups and multiple joints.

A great example of a compound exercise is the squat. When squatting you are using all the muscles from the waist down as well as many muscles in your back. The joints involved in a squat are the ankles, knees, and hips.

\*show pictures demonstrating the joints and muscles used for isolation and compound movements, picture of my squatting and hamstring curl\*

Conversely, an isolation exercise is exactly as it sounds, and isolation.

It involves working one muscle through the movement of one joint.

Using the example of the hamstring curl, you noticed that the hamstring is the only muscle that is working in the knee is the only joint that is moving.

Now I tend to favor compound exercises over isolation exercises because you get more bang for your buck.

You get more work done when using compound exercises because you are not only able to move more weight, but you were also able to involve more muscles.

I think isolation exercises definitely have their place, but in my opinion this is well after all other work is done.

I feel most programs should consist of mostly compound movements, with isolation movements used in order to build up weaknesses or specific areas.

## **2. Sets and Reps**

Sets and Reps is an aspect of training that a lot of people are confused about.

This is the part of the program that determines what you are training for, and if you are going to get the results from your program that you are wanting.

Meaning, that if you are wanting to build muscle, but are training in a rep range that is geared towards endurance training, you will never be able to build the muscle you are hoping to.

I see this all the time in specialty programs; a program for women to build up their butt, but it has them doing sets of 20 or more of each exercise. Sure you will be exhausted and you'll have the muscle "burning", but the hypertrophy response you are hoping for will not come because you are actually training the muscles to work for an extended amount of time, instead of forcing them to grow.

Sets and Reps can be broken down into basically three categories.

Training for strength - 1-5 reps per set

Training for hypertrophy - 6-12/15 reps per set

And training for endurance - 20+ reps per set

When I create programs for either myself or for someone else, I often try to include all three categories into the program because I think all three are important.

Obviously, I feel strength development is important as noted above, but you can only become so strong before your muscles have to grow in size to accommodate and build new levels of strength. Plus as we build new muscle tissue, our resting metabolic rate increases, that is the number of calories we burn just sitting on the couch.

This is why I also include a good portion of hypertrophy training, either within each workout, or its own separate phase.

Endurance work, I often include as conditioning work. Something to get the heart rate up, and work towards being able to do a great deal of work over a longer period of time. I view endurance reps simply as training to do a lot of work without tiring.

You definitely do not have to have all three represented in your program. For example, if I were to have someone who did not want to gain any size or weight, but simply wanted to be stronger, their program would consist of sets and reps that align mostly in the strength category or 1-5 reps.

At this point you may be wondering "so I know how many reps to do, but how many sets?" In simplest terms:

Reps and sets have an inverse relationship.

More reps = fewer sets

Training for strength - 5-10 sets

Training for hypertrophy - 3-5 sets

Training for endurance - 2-3 sets

### **3. Frequency**

How often your train is going to depend largely on a variety of things from the amount of time each week you have to train to what your specific goals are.

Most people see best results when they train 3-4 days a week.

If you can only train 2 or 3 days a week, your best option is to use full body workouts. This simply means that for each workout you will be training both your upper and lower body within the same workout.

If done correctly, a split routine where you train upper and lower body on separate days can be used if you can only train 2 or 3 times a week, but this has to be programmed with much more diligence in order to see results.

For me personally I like either 3 or 4 days a week, utilizing a split routine. This is what works best for me, however, I do go through phases in which I will switch this up to full body workouts.

I prefer to use a split routine because it allows me to get more work done in each workout for each body part. This works best when training 4 days a week.

# Resources to Check Out

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*The two resources below I do not receive any kind of commission on if you decide to make a purchase. I just have used them myself and think they are great resources for anyone who may be interested.*

## 1. [Flexible Dieting 2.0 by Krissy Mae Cagney](#)

Flexible Dieting 2.0 by Krissy Mae Cagney is probably my favorite book on nutrition.

This book explains how to implement and use flexible dieting in order to reach your goals.

Flexible dieting is similar to what many people know as “If it fits your macros” however, it has much more focus on be nutritionally healthy.

Overall I am a huge fan of flexible dieting having used it myself in the past and it is the basis behind my own diet and what I recommend to other.

It can be strict enough for you to meet your goals, however, it stresses that this is a lifestyle. It’s not a diet you will try for a little while then move on.

Because it is a lifestyle change, it gives the user freedom to enjoy foods we all enjoy. For example, if you want pizza for dinner, that’s fine, you just need to plan for it.

If you want to learn more about it, I highly encourage you to check out Krissy’s book.

## 2. [Advanced 5 x 5 by Elliott Hulse](#)

Advanced 5 x 5 is Elliott Hulse’s rendition of the popular 5 x 5 training program.

5 x 5 is itself a great program, but Elliott takes it to a whole other level by explaining how to use and change it as you progress as a lifter.

I've used this program in the past and have seen great results, and periodically go through phases in which I go back to 5 x 5 training.

If you are just starting out or getting back to training, I highly suggest starting with a 5 x 5 routine.

This kind of program is great at building not only a great deal of strength, but also muscle as well. It is a very good, well rounded program.