

Diet plan 101

Luke Barden, April 2013

When it comes to diet, the meaning of the word and its implications have become misguided and incorrect.

‘Diet’ is the food you intake, broken down into macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fat) and micronutrients (iron, zinc, chromium and others). It is not, Weight Watchers, Slimming World, Atkins, the newly released Body By Vi, or any other ‘fad’ you or your friends may have tried.

Diet is therefore, the description of the food you eat. Be it healthy, unhealthy or somewhere in the middle.

Although Nutrition is a key area with regards to weight management, it is something that lots of gym-goers are not 100% sure on, and may find they are making mistakes.

The simplicity of it, is that your body requires X amount of calories per day, merely to function. If you eat more than X amount of calories, you will gain weight, if you eat less, you will lose it.

The problem is, what do you cut back on? Fats? Carbs? Or Protein?

Firstly, although ‘fats’ the micronutrient shares the name of ‘fat’, the body composition people want to avoid, they are not necessarily the reason you will gain weight.

Different people react to each macronutrient differently, so you may find that actually you can eat as many foods that are high in fat as you want, as long as you are minimising the amount of carbs you intake.

You will only find out what your body tends to store as fat, and what it burns through daily activity with trial and error. You need to test it on yourself.

A generally accepted ‘truth’ in the gym is that if you totally cut out carbs, you will lose weight. This is almost always true, but, if you ever decide to start eating carbs again (because you don’t want to avoid them for your whole life?) your body will actively store them as fat, as you took them away for so long, it wants to be sure if you stop them again, it still has some it can access when it needs to. This can explain some of the celebrity ‘yoyo’ dieters who get really thin for a period of time before piling weight back on aggressively.

The essential information you need to know, is that all macronutrients are needed by the body. The brain is made primarily of fats, and is mainly fuelled by carbohydrates (as glucose). So you need both to keep your mind sharp! And proteins are the building blocks of the body, so when your training in the gym to remove protein would be like trying to run a car with no petrol.

A simple, and yet very effective way of maximising your weight loss is through cycling your carbs over a 3 day period. This way the body doesn't adjust to the reduced carb days, and will still be expecting your standard intake of calories, meaning the deficit is filled with fat stores.

To give a simple example to try, if you had 3 meals a day consisting of:

A chicken breast

A sweet potato

Boiled vegetables

To cycle this you would have the above on Day 1, Day 2 would be as above, but you would only have half a sweet potato with each meal, and Day 3 would have no sweet potato.

After Day 3 you would go back to Day 1 again, and continue the rotation.

If you keep the rest of your meals clean (i.e. no takeaways and/or rich desserts) you should find you see really fast results!

Good Luck!