
Biggest Nutritional Mistakes of a Bodybuilder

1. Eating too much

We all know the biology. Excess calories are stored as bodyfat. For overeating to be at the top of the nutritional false move list is no mistake. Building muscle is the number one goal of bodybuilding and bodyfat is the bodybuilder's number one enemy. What's the sense of working an impressive set of muscles requiring much blood, sweat and tears, if it's obscured by a layer of lard? May I suggest the obvious? If you are overweight, eat less. The simple act on consuming less food will cause you to lose weight. Be aware, however, that if you eat less but retain your current food profile, you will just construct a miniature version of your old self. Less of the same will shrink you, but your proportion of muscle to bodyfat will stay the same. The end result? You look like your old self, just pounds lighter. Truly sensational physical transformation lies in losing bodyfat while maintaining muscle. To achieve true nutritional nirvana, building muscle while simultaneously losing bodyfat, we need to practice nutrient based dieting.

To lose fat and retain muscle, besides doing aerobic exercise, you need to eat precise amounts of protein, carbohydrates and fat. You need to become nutrient conscious. Read the labels on the food you eat. What is the consensus on achieving metabolic nirvana? To hang on to muscle, you need protein and lots of it. To maintain energy and fuel growth you need quality carbs. To shed the fat blanket and keep the muscle, to effect the physical transformation you seek, you need lots of quality nutrients, but not in excess. You tread the razor's edge between enough and too much. Everyone is different. Experiment and monitor.

2. Eating too little

Undereating is as bad as overeating. Physiologically, it's impossible to build muscle if your diet lacks proper nutrients. Ample amounts of protein, carbohydrates, and yes, even fat are necessary to build muscle. The trick is balance, you need enough high quality food to grow muscle. Yet even the finest muscle fuel will be stored as fat if taken in excess. One key strategy is to confine your eating to 'clean fuel', nutritionally dense foods with little or no fat and sugar. And you need to eat plenty of them. A serious weight trainer who additionally performs regular cardiovascular work will need to the extra nutrients to cope with the additional metabolic demands.

3. Insufficient protein

The fact remains: Protein is the single most important nutrient for muscle regeneration and building. The trick is to use only lean protein. Protein and fat usually coexist in food sources. Meat, fish, fowl, dairy, these primary sources all can have much fat content. In the old days, we did not worry about such inconveniences. As a result, heavy protein consumers developed nasty clogged arteries and astronomical cholesterol rates. The fault wasn't in the protein, but the fat attached to the protein.

Nowadays, we hardcore weight trainers confine our protein to nonfat or low fat sources. Skim milk, egg whites, fish, skinless fowl, flank steak, and of course that staple of weight training, protein powder. These foods represent powerful, clean protein sources. Start by ingesting 1 - 1.5 grams of protein per pound of bodyweight per day. To stay anabolic, divide the total intake into 4-8 equal portions and eat these low fat protein sources at regular intervals throughout the day.

4. Failing to cook for yourself

Meal preparation is a critical skill. To be truly successful as a bodybuilder, you should be able to prepare your own food. Nutritionally sound foods eaten throughout the day are necessary to obtain anabolism. Most male bodybuilders (and more than a few female ones) do not cook. Big mistake. Why depend on mom, your spouse, restaurants or fast food joints for the endless succession of small, nutritious feedings required to mount a serious bodybuilder effort?

Not only do you have to come to grips with cooking, but you have to develop a wide and inventive repertoire of dishes and meals. Otherwise you are locked into the equivalent of prison chow. Jail house cuisine is bland, unimaginative, tasteless. Kinda like the clean foods we bodybuilders choose to contend with day in, day out.

You need a lot of imagination to deal with clean food. Tuna and egg white need not be dull. How do the ignorant become enlightened? Comb the magazines. Read low fat cook books. Assemble your ingredients, set aside some time and have at it. Plus, you'll impress the heck out of your mom when you serve her a low fat gourmet feast some fine Sunday.

5. Not keeping a nutrition log

As cumbersome as it might sound, the muscle elite keep daily records of what they consume and when they consume it. They write it all down in a log. This allows them to keep a running tally of their nutritional progress. They establish a long term game plan and keep daily tabs on food and supplement consumption. Tracking results, identifying trends, finding what works, discarding what doesn't, a log becomes your nutritional report card. You can make truly accurate assessments and implement intelligent corrective action when you base your adjustments on factual data and objective analysis. Otherwise it degenerates into wishful thinking and self-delusion.

So begin by assembling data. The truly complete nutritional log lists date, time, food type, and carb, fat, sugar, sodium, protein and caloric content. Body stats are notated along with short descriptive phrases on the athlete's general condition. Drawn up in column format, the comprehensive notation of a meal takes about two minutes. And you'll find that the purchases of a food nutritional value book (available at any bookstore) will be of a great help. Did I hear you say what a hassle? It could be worse. Thomas Jefferson wrote down every financial transaction he made in his adult life and he lived to be 83.

6. Too much fat and sugar

The twin demons of nutrition. Fat is calorically the densest of all nutrients, with nine calories per gram. Fat is hard to digest and is the body's preferred storage material. Though a certain amount of fat is needed for brain and other bodily functions, the little that's required is easily acquired through regular low fat eating.

Excess sugar is easily converted to fat once in the body. Buyer beware: A food may be advertised as low fat and still be loaded with sugar. Taken in excess, this sugar can be quickly converted to fat. Quite a few of the sports drinks and nutritional sports bars are loaded with sugar. Limit fat intake to roughly 15% of your total caloric consumption.

7. Not drinking enough water

As we know, the body is 67% water, and we should drink lots of water throughout the day. Water courses throughout the body's plumbing; downing copious amounts throughout the day keeps the pipes clean as chrome. So flush the system continually and regularly, regenerating muscle cells through water replenishment. Drink 10 eight-ounce glasses of water a day.

8. Lacking positive nitrogen balance

Positive nitrogen balance is the physiological state in which muscular growth is possible. How to achieve it? Take in a fresh supply of muscle building nutrients every 2-3 hours. The human body works most efficiently when given small feedings at regular intervals throughout the day. These evenly spaced feedings should be composed of high quality protein and carbohydrates.

How can you eat every 2-3 hours when faced with the rigors of a job, family and real world responsibilities? A nutritious sports bar and a glass of skim milk can supply 50 grams of protein and 50-100 grams of carbohydrates. How long does it take to eat a sandwich? Or drink a protein shake? How about a piece of fruit and a chicken breast? You get the idea. This ties into food preparation; pack clean food snacks and graze throughout the day. When an athlete is in positive nitrogen balance, the body is ready, willing and able to grow.

9. Lacking food balance in meals

Imbalance is rampant in this off kilter world. Food consumption is no exception. Balanced eating as defined by some nutritionists is not quite the same as balanced eating as defined by the muscle elite. The optimal feeding, according to the elite, is a skillful blending of lean protein, starch and fibrous carbohydrates, minuscule amounts of fat and no sugar. The proportional divisions vary depending upon individual characteristics. Some folks are

carb sensitive and need to keep starchy carbs to a minimum, otherwise they blow up like cartoon characters who've swallowed an air hose. Others thrive on a diet heavy on potatoes and rice with no ill effects.

How you metabolize food is as individual as your hair color or height. You need to determine how foods affect you. Rule of thumb for proportional balance: 50% calories from carbs, 35% from protein and 15% from fat. This is a good starting point, and careful monitoring once on this 50-35-15 regimen will dictate any necessary adjustments. The goal is building muscle and reducing bodyfat. How do you achieve a real world balance with traveling around with a scale, calorie book, and calculator? At each meal, fill 50% of your plate with carbohydrates. Half of these should be dense, starchy carbs (rice, potatoes) and half should be fibrous carbs (broccoli, green beans, lettuce, etc.). The other half of the dinner plate should consist of lean protein (skinless chicken, turkey, fish, etc.). Don't worry about the 15% fat... it's there!

10. Ignoring supplementation

We all have little holes and shortcomings in our diets, and supplements help us round them out. All elite athletes use supplements. The expense, hassle and confusion of diet supplementing scares off some trainers. Big mistake. Start with a prepackaged multi-pack. In addition, a quality protein powder, a high grade carbohydrate powder, and a big supply of beef liver tabs will do wonders for your recuperation, training, and physique.