

Top 10 Mistakes Made by Bodybuilders

My goal is to share with you the nutrition lessons I've learned through developing eating regimens for several top bodybuilders. My hope is that these tips will allow you to correct any flaws in your nutrition program and hence maximize your progress. Here are the 10 biggest mistakes to avoid if you want to fulfill your bodybuilding potential.

1. Dieting impatiently

Many bodybuilders jump from one diet to another without ever giving the initial program enough time to work. It takes at least three weeks for your body to adapt to dietary modifications. If you start a high carb, moderate protein, low fat diet with reduced calories, and your goal is to lose fat, expect to notice visible changes after approximately 21 days. Don't anticipate immediate changes in your physique.

2. Failing to accurately track calories

Be sure to count not only calories, but carbohydrates, proteins, and fats as well. Because they don't keep a record of what they're eating, many bodybuilders don't lose fat at the rate they expect, while others fail to gain weight. Don't make the mistake of miscalculating your calorie intake. Successful bodybuilders keep precise records; they don't guess or estimate. Consult the *Nutrition Almanac* or a comparable source for food values and buy a scale.

3. Eating haphazardly

Whether you're trying to lose fat or add lean body mass, consistency is key, and sporadic eating is anathema to making progress. If you're a hardgainer or you have a difficult time getting ripped, the five times a day meal plan is best. This approach (a meal every two or three hours) inhibits storage of fat and increases lean body mass by enhancing nutrient absorption.

4. Depending on the scale to gauge progress

Don't depend solely on the scale to fine tune your diet. When bodybuilders try to add size, they often become discouraged when their bodyweight doesn't increase rapidly. They frequently jump the gun by adding too many calories to accelerate their progress. Similarly, precontest competitors striving to get down in size sometimes subtract too many calories. While the scale and other measuring devices like bodyfat calipers are effective tools, it's better to rely on photos and an unbiased eye to measure your progress. After all, bodybuilding is a visual sport. If you look leaner and fuller, then your fat loss diet is probably working - even if the scale and bodyfat calipers don't agree.

5. Overeating (especially carbohydrates)

Athletes who try to add mass often go overboard and eat an excessive number of calories, which are then converted into bodyfat. Then there are bodybuilders who eat a very low fat diet but still gain too much bodyfat because of an extremely high intake of carbohydrates. Sure, carbs are required for hard training, and they aid in recovery, But once the body absorbs what it needs, the excess will be quickly deposited as fat.

6. Failing to personalize your bodybuilding diet

There's nothing wrong with learning from what the pro bodybuilders do. However, Dorian Yates's diet is vastly different from Nasser El Sonbaty's. What they have in common is an individualized, or customized approach. Dorian's diet might not work for Nasser's, and vice versa. Maintaining detailed records of what you eat and how you react to those foods can help you customize a diet that's ideal for your needs.

7. Viewing supplements as a magic bullet

Some bodybuilders try to shed fat by taking carnitine and chromium, yet they fail to initiate the fat burning process by lowering their caloric consumption. Others use creatine, glutamine or branched chain amino acids to beef up, but fail to consume enough calories and proteins to stimulate a positive nitrogen balance. Supplements work to enhance a nutrition program, not to make up for poor planning and nutritional mistakes.

8. Becoming a slave to canned tuna

To be successful, you have to eat the right way all the time. I've known athletes who burn out from the boredom of eating nothing but plain chicken breasts and tuna straight out of the can. You must be creative and change things up if you don't want to burn yourself out. If you're in for the long haul you will not want to drive yourself crazy by eating tuna and rice or chicken and potatoes for every meal.

9. Eliminating all fat

Cutting fat from your diet is helpful in controlling total caloric intake, but removing fat completely from your diet and relying exclusively on very low fat or fat free proteins like turkey, fish and protein powders can lead to a decrease in fat metabolism and/or retard growth. A low fat diet that includes essential fatty acids found in meat, chicken and fish is useful in promoting optimal recovery growth and fat metabolism.

10. Making enormous changes all at once

When adding or subtracting calories from your diet, try to make very small incremental changes to allow your body to adapt these dietary manipulations. Severe reductions in calories will cause the body to hoard fat; an abundant increase will stimulate fat storage.