

WORDS
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A woman with dark hair, wearing an orange sports bra and blue leggings with a geometric pattern, is leaning forward and stretching her right leg against a dark metal railing. She is holding her right foot with her left hand. She is wearing a black smartwatch on her left wrist and has bright orange nail polish. The background is a blurred city street with buildings and a street lamp.

THE *Perfect Formula*
FOR BODY TRANSFORMATION
PART TWO



Now that we covered how to get started with a transformation program, understanding progress pics vs the scale, selecting the division for your body type and the complete breakdown on macros, it's time to move into a few other important factors of finding your perfect formula. In this issue I will discuss cardio, training, salt, water, sleep, and a myriad of condiments.

So **how much cardio do you need**, or do you need any at all? When it comes to cardio, there will be mixed reviews on how much, what type, what machine and when to do it. In my opinion, this all depends on the person's genetics and their

anything to add moving forward. I also believe in fasted cardio as it does jump start the metabolism for the day, and it puts you in a fat burning state before eating a meal. It always helps with my mental state and seems to boost my mood in the morning, starting the day off right.

The most difficult part of fasted cardio is having enough time to complete it in the morning, while getting enough sleep, which we all know is extremely important for recovery.

Cardio can be done in many ways, such as tempo, speed, heart rate target and time of

good pace range to aim for while completing your cardio session.

Everybody is different, and you may need more intense cardio such as hits, which is using a slow and fast-paced mix for intervals. This can be done using a stairmill, treadmill, elliptical, amt, or recumbent bike to name a few. It would be 2 min at a slow pace and 1 min fast or 3 min slow pace 2 min fast.

There are so many variations you could use; the main thing is finding out what works for you and the goals you're trying to achieve.

For a bodybuilder, we must

TRANSFORMATION

everyday life/job. If you're working at a desk job and sitting most of the day, odds are there would be some type of cardio in your plan. If you are a labor worker and on your feet all day, you could be one of those clients doing little to no cardio at all. Cardio is only needed as a last resort and should be used as a metabolism booster.

Cardio burns off calories and sometimes hard-earned muscle; be sure you are not doing too much. The diet should be the main focus and use cardio as back up to jump start the fat burning. If you start with too much cardio too quickly, you won't have

the day. Keep in mind doing too much cardio with a strict diet can also cause muscle loss, inflammation, achy and fatigue legs.

Cardio sessions should last longer than 20 min as your body primarily uses energy from glycogen stores in the first 20 min of exercise.

After 20 minutes, your body starts to use more stored fat than glycogen, so you'll typically burn the most fat during longer sessions. To find your target heart rate for fat burning is 220 minus your age.

Anything within the range of 130 bpm to 150 bpm is a

be careful with cardio because it can backfire on someone's physique, making them look soft and watery. Many times, I have reduced a client's cardio and watched them get tighter.

I have done well with fasted cardio in the morning to jump start the metabolism, training mid-day to jump start it again, then an evening session to jump start it one more time.

I feel this helps keep the calories burned throughout the day. If you feel like you're going backward, losing muscle, or getting achy in the legs, it may be time to back off a little and see what the diet is capable of.



Learn and apply whatever your body needs. It is not mandatory to do cardio if you're competing. I have recommended to several clients to avoid cardio as part of their program due to their everyday life and their job. They are active, so you must account for that.

Moving on to what should your training split look like? This will depend on the division you're competing in or the goal you are trying to achieve. What I like to do is go back to those check-in pictures and take a better look to see what work is needed to complete the shape you're looking for.

If your legs need improvement, try to apply 2-3 leg days to the program.

If they are over dominating, you may need to back down. Look to see where your weakness is and address those areas with the correct exercises to bring them up or down.

I enjoy training five days a week with two rest days as I feel this works best for my recovery and growth. If you're in certain divisions, you may not need to work certain body parts as much or at all.

For example, bikini and wellness competitors wouldn't necessarily need to work chest, they would just double up on another area needing work. To give you an idea, my training split looks something like this.

Some people like training three days on, one day off, and repeat. I personally like knowing each week which days I'm taking off so I can plan other things to help with my life structure and balance. Keep in mind the body does need rest to recover. I don't advise training 7 days a week. If you want to be active on rest days, you can do cardio sessions.

For training programs, each person is different just like the macros and nutrition. You need to find what works for you. Will it be high volume, heavy weight, light weight, low reps, high reps, slow or fast tempo, supersets, stationary sets, reload weeks, one week heavy one week light or even throwing in pause sets mixed



MONDAY
QUADS OR LEGS OVERALL
ESSENTIAL FOR MANY PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES, FROM BASICS TO ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE.



TUESDAY
CHEST AND SHOULDERS
FOCUSING HERE HELPS CREATE SYMMETRY IN MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT OVERALL.



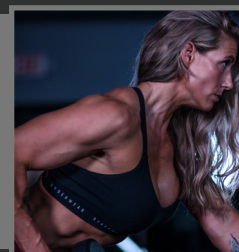
WEDNESDAY
REST
AN OFTEN UNDERESTIMATED COMPONENT YOUR ROUTINE. DO NOT SKIP PROPER REST.



THURSDAY
BACK
FOCUS ON ROWS, PULL-UPS, LAT PULLDOWNS, DEADLIFTS TO IMPROVE YOUR POSTURE.



FRIDAY
HAMSTRINGS, GLUTES OR LEGS
PLAYS A HUGE ROLE IN OVERALL HEALTH, MOBILITY, AND PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE.



SATURDAY
ARMS
NOT JUST FOR LOOKS. THIS IMPROVES REACHING, GRASPING, OR MANIPULATING OBJECTS.



SUNDAY
REST
REMEMBER TO GIVE YOUR BODY ENOUGH TIME TO RECOVER BETWEEN WORKOUTS.

with positive, negative or ISO holds. There is no right or wrong when it comes to training; it's what works for you and only you.

After you have put in the hard work, one of the most important things for recovery is sleep.

Bodybuilders are always on the lookout for new effective ways to build muscle by using the latest supplements, a sophisticated training routine, or a new diet, when the most important thing is right in front of them, sleep. During sleep, growth hormones are produced, and protein synthesis occurs, aiding in muscle recovery and growth. Without adequate sleep, time in the gym could end up being wasted time.

Sleeping 8-10 hours per night is similar to fasting and is catabolic to muscle growth.

Eating prior to sleep can help reverse this process and increase protein synthesis. Muscles are broken down during these conditions to provide the stomach with amino acids during this time of starvation. Eating before bed is crucial in offsetting this cycle.

You may have also heard of bodybuilders waking up in the middle of the night to eat to stop this process. Try to set your circadian rhythm; this helps with fast and more productive results. It's important to adhere to a routine each day, exercise at the same time, avoid caffeine, alcohol or nicotine in the evenings, and power down your screens well before bedtime.

If you keep this routine, you will see the results you are looking for. Lack of sleep is shown to negatively affect muscle growth and can lead to muscle wasting, poor exercise performance, and increased body fat.

Testosterone is an anabolic hormone that is crucial for muscle growth, and elevated cortisol can lead to fat storage and weight gain.

Human growth hormone secretion also happens during sleep, so inadequate sleeping hours will result in less of this vital muscle building hormone. Losing sleep can undo the work put into muscle building, making the body appear softer and watery the next day.

Moving along to salt and water, and how important it is in your program. What is the importance of sodium? Salt is an electrolyte that is categorized in the same group as potassium,

YOU LOSE MUCH MORE SODIUM WHEN YOU SWEAT THAN ANY OTHER ELECTROLYTE.

magnesium, calcium, and phosphate.

Electrolytes create electrically charged ions, when dissolved in the body's fluid. The main job for sodium and potassium is maintaining the right balance of fluids inside and outside of your cells.

Electrolytes have a few other jobs as well, like maintaining proper PH of your blood. It's important to note that when we perspire, **sweat takes electrolytes with it on the way out of the pores.**

You lose much more sodium when you sweat than any other electrolyte. Some major benefits of sodium for athletes are that it boosts intracellular water retention, may increase endurance, maintain fluid balance, improve hydration, and helps muscle contract. Feel free to salt your food because salt is your friend.



Water is extremely important for bodybuilding as well and its main purpose is to:

Transport nutrients to your cells and waste out of the body

Helps form the structures of proteins as well as glycogen

Helps you move and flex your muscles

Reduces inflammation and muscle soreness

Maintains muscle pumps

Prevents muscle breakdown

Speeds up recovery

Improves muscle growth



Believe it or not, most people walk around dehydrated every day. Are you drinking enough water daily? Keep in mind soda, coffee, tea, and alcohol do not count as water intake. Water can even help metabolize fat; without enough water the kidneys can't function properly. When this happens, some of the load is transferred to the liver.

The liver metabolism stores fat for energy, if the liver is doing some of the kidney's work, it burns less fat. In addition, water can reduce feelings of hunger. Water can even reduce fluid retention, and help you shed excess water weight. When water is in short supply, the body thinks there is a shortage and begins

hoarding it. This water is stored in the extra cellular spaces. In other words, your skin starts to look soft and puffy. Water also keeps your regular, if you drink too little water, your body steals it from the organs such as the colon. When this happens, you experience constipation. Water also allows you to digest your meals efficiently.

Drinking enough water will help aid in your overall health and fitness goals.

So, what do you know about condiments. Do you like bland food, I sure don't. As we know salt is your friend and we can all use some good flavor while dieting. This section is the hot topic of condiments as they can make or

Calorie-free condiments provide a HUGE advantage. They allow you to add flavor and enhance the taste of your meals without significantly increasing your calorie intake.

break your fitness goals. It's always best to use condiments sparingly. If you're using salt seasonings, you can't really add the same amount of Himalayan or sea salt on your meals. If you're using a non-salt seasoning, feel free to add salt to your plan.

Hot sauce is a condiment already high in sodium, be sure not to add extra salt to these meals, as it can quickly increase your sodium intake daily. Salt intake is not the only thing we need to worry about, it's the calorie free condiments. Using condiments can increase your calorie intake if you're not careful. Be aware of the sugar free choices, these ingredients are usually not so friendly.

They grab your attention by the marketing of zero sugar, **be sure to look at the ingredient section, as most of the ingredients are bad for you and can cause weight gain.** Cinnamon and salsa are metabolism boosters which give you good taste, and mustard is a free food due to it containing nothing.

If you're choosing ketchup, use the no salt added since it's low in calories, sugar, carbs and has no high fructose corn syrup, use sparingly. Ms. dash has seasonings with salt and salt free.

My personal favorite is RA Seasonings as they are very low in sodium with about 60mg per serving and come in many flavors. I also like to use skinny girl dressings and sauces as they are made with more natural and healthy ingredients.

This concludes part two of the perfect formula. I hope this helps you understand the process better and helps you fill in the missing puzzle pieces to complete your transformation. We all have the ability to turn our own portrait into a masterpiece!



PHOTO CREDIT: BEN VIATORI

About the author:

I am a professional female bodybuilder with the IFBB Pro league, fitness model, and entrepreneur. I am part owner of Harlan's Elite Fitness and Harlan's Elite Customs. I am also a certified personal trainer of Harlan's Personal Training as well as an online coach.

2022 Ms. Olympia; 7th in the world, IFBB Indy Pro (1st), Olympia Qualified and July Cover of Amazons Fitness Magazine. 2021 Women of Excellence Award. 2020 IFBB Rising Phoenix World Championships (7th) Best Poser Award.

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