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Nutrition Guide for Fat Loss



A FLEXIBLE DIETING APPROACH

Everything you need to know and nothing you don't

on how to lose fat and quit yo-yo dieting once and for all.

Words by Michelle Gadd

The purpose of the GUF Nutrition Guide For Fat Loss is to provide you with practical information for achieving a healthy fat loss goal. This guide primarily discusses nutrition for fat loss and why it's the most efficient and accurate way to achieve a fat loss goal.

It's important to know that fat loss or gain can be impacted by factors like stress, disease, medications, sleep, genetics, inactivity and so many other variables. However, if we take away these variables, there are basic principles of fat loss that are important to understand.

On a personal note, this is information I wish I had learned many, many years

ago. It is information that helped me achieve my own fat loss goal in a healthy, sustainable, non-restrictive way and ultimately healed my relationship with food. This knowledge was an incredible tool for me on my Get Unstuck Journey and I hope it will be for you as well.

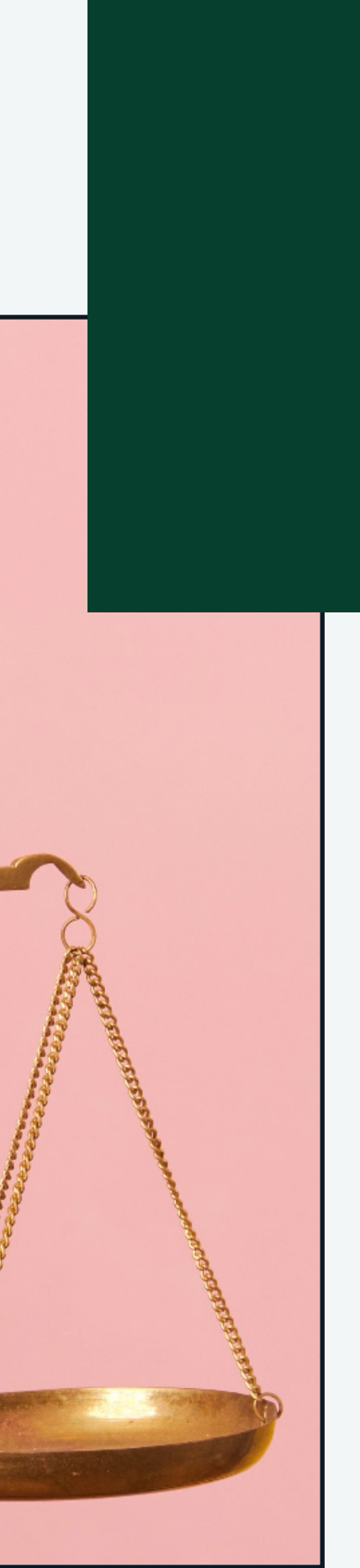
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Energy Balance

Simply put, calories are energy intake through food. Energy balance is achieved when the amount of energy we consume through food, is equal to the amount of energy we expend. In a simple scenario, energy balance could be used to describe someone who is maintaining their current weight because the amount of calories they are consuming is equal to the amount of calories they expend.

Energy Surplus

An energy surplus is a way of describing consuming more energy than what we expend. In a simple scenario, energy surplus could be used to describe someone who is gaining weight (fat or muscle mass) because the amount of calories they are consuming is greater than the amount of calories they expend. Another term for energy surplus is positive energy balance.

Energy Deficit

An energy deficit is a way of describing consuming less energy than what we expend. In a simple scenario, energy deficit could be used to describe someone who is losing weight because the amount of calories they are consuming is less than the amount of calories they expend.



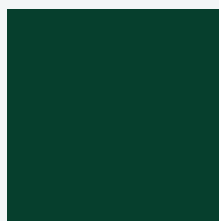
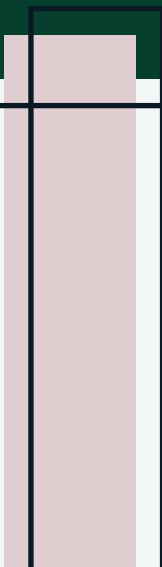
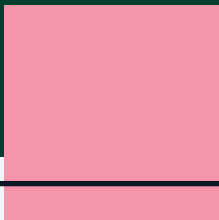
Key Points

**If you're maintaining your weight,
you're in an energy balance**

**If you're gaining weight, you're in an
energy surplus**

**If you're losing weight you're in an
energy deficit**

**We have to keep a food diary to
collect data to determine which
scenario we fall into**



What scenario are you?

People are usually in an energy balance, energy surplus, or energy deficit.

The easiest way to figure out which scenario you fall into other than generally observing that you're maintaining, losing, or gaining weight is to try to accurately measure the amount of energy you're consuming.

Research has shown that people are notoriously inaccurate at estimating the amount of energy they consume and expend. We have a ballpark in our head, often what we know to be the "norm" and that is what we tend to self-report.

Am I telling you to track calories?

If there is a negative connotation attached to the idea of tracking your food intake, I would encourage you to consider the narrative where you are playing the part of a curious investigator, mining for data on your own health. What you're going to measure is energy - in a simplified and neutral process.

healthy, sustainable way that doesn't require effort. And the same can be said of gaining muscle: it takes work. For both goals, monitoring energy intake can be an extremely useful tool for a season.

Which leads me to the next important point: the effort you are putting into fat loss for your health should be a goal with a clear end in mind. The ideal is to be in a healthy energy balance and so we want to get in and out of a fat loss phase in the safest and most effective way possible. I will talk about exiting a fat loss phase at the end of this guide.

Tracking energy consumption is a useful tool for a finite amount of time. The knowledge and insights you gain from it should ultimately allow you to make intuitive, educated choices about food and your energy requirements.

There is no magic way to lose fat in a

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Couldn't I just exercise more to lose fat?

It is possible to change your energy balance by expending more energy through exercise than you're consuming. The problem with this is it is hard to measure accurately how much energy you expend through exercise. People often overestimate how much energy they burn through exercise and then make up for the deficit they've created through consuming more calories. The Smart Watches and accessories we use to track energy output are usually inaccurate.

It can be frustrating for people when they still don't achieve their fat loss goal when already doing 5-7 days of strenuous exercise per week. We can only exercise so much.

So why bother exercising? If you

become a part of the GUF community you'll learn very quickly that our primary focus is on cardio for benefits like heart health, and resistance training for benefits like maintaining muscle tissue, bone health, decreasing risk of injury as we age, and many more reasons - all benefits that have very little to do with being a certain size or looking a certain way.

Cardio and resistance training are a great way to help maintain a healthy body composition, but not the easiest way to lose fat. That is why we need to look at nutrition.

So where do we start? This is where things are going to get very practical.

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Step 1:

Download the free version of MyFitnessPal. MyFitnessPal is a data tracking app that allows you to track your nutrition and break it down into macronutrients and micronutrients. The three macronutrients are carbohydrates, protein and fat. MyFitnessPal has a great feature where you can scan barcodes to get nutritional value on packaged food. The database is huge and if you do a search, you'll often find the food and portion size you've prepared entered already.

It is valuable to use a kitchen scale for determining accurate portion sizes. For example, when I'm focused on building muscle, I want to make sure my protein intake is optimal. I put an empty plate on the scale and zero the scale. Then I add my protein to get the portion size I need to meet my daily protein requirements. I do the same for carbs and other foods. This takes me less than a minute to do.

Weighing food is also valuable because using a measuring cup or spoon is often inaccurate. Unfortunately when a package shows portion sizes for something like peanut butter as 1 tablespoon or 15 grams, if you make a comparison, 15 grams often comes out as a lot less than a tablespoon. It's these little inaccuracies that quickly create an energy surplus.

Step 2:

For four days, eat exactly as you normally would and enter everything you eat into MyFitnessPal. All we're doing here is collecting useful data on our energy intake. I'm going to say something, and it's because I needed

to hear it on my own journey. If you don't need to hear this please ignore it: Don't lie. There is so much unhealthy guilt around food that even when we're collecting data for our own benefit, we'll try to fudge our entries to tip the energy balance in the direction that we deem acceptable.

My tendency when I first started tracking was to ignore little snacks and underestimate food quantities. Guess what happened? I didn't lose weight. I even told myself, "I'm trying everything!" I gave myself a little pep talk to kick my butt into gear and started tracking accurately. Guess what happened? Fat loss.

Step 3:

After four days, you need to figure out the average amount of energy you're consuming per day. Add up all the calories from each day and divide it by four to get your daily caloric intake.

If you have been maintaining your weight these calories reflect your daily maintenance calories or energy balance - you are consuming as much energy as you are expending.

If you have been gaining weight these calories reflect that you are in an energy surplus and are consuming more calories than you are expending (Please remember, there are many other factors that can influence weight but if we ignore energy intake when it comes to body composition goals, we might be doing ourselves a huge disservice).

Step 4:

If your goal is fat loss, you now have to take the data you've collected and use

it to create an energy deficit. Keep in mind that many people are consuming 3,000 calories per day which is about 1,000 calories over the recommended amount. Creating an energy deficit should not be an extremely restrictive process and I would encourage a conservative approach to begin. Diet culture will often say all women need to eat 1,500 calories or less a day to lose weight. That would be crazy to suddenly cut 1,500 calories from a 3,000 calorie a day energy intake. Not only would you be ravenous, you'd probably hate your life. It's this style of dieting that is almost always unsuccessful in the long run.

I recommend trying to lose fat on the highest number of calories possible while eating the foods you love! So if you've been consuming 3,000 calories a day, start with trying a modest deficit, making sure you're not excluding your favourite foods. Another reason fat loss is often unsuccessful is people think they have to cut out entire food groups or their favourite sweet or savoury foods. Being overly restrictive doesn't work in the long run!

Healthy fat loss is around .5 to 1lb per week. 1lb equates to about 3,500 calories. If you are eating 3,000 calories per day, in order to lose 1lb per week, you would need to be in an energy deficit of 500 calories a day (Keep in mind we're not including the amount of exercise you're doing). If you are a highly active individual you might be able to go for an even more conservative deficit.

Combining nutrition with exercise is an area that I go over in more detail with 1:1 clients who are interested in pursuing a fat loss or body-

recomposition goal. For this guide we're focusing on nutrition.

I hope you realize what I'm telling you is great news! It's possible to lose fat on a reasonable, healthy amount of calories.

Key Points

Download the free version of MyFitness Pal

Eat exactly as you would for 4 days and record it accurately

After 4 days figure out the average amount of energy your consuming per day so you have an idea of the amount of calories keeping you in an energy balance, surplus, or deficit

If your goal is fatloss, create a conservative energy deficit

Balance your macros. Macros stands for macronutrients and refers to the big 3-carbs, fats, and protein

Continue to monitor your energy intake

Step 5:

Now it's time to balance your macros. As already mentioned, protein, fats and carbs are the major macronutrients. Each macronutrient has a caloric amount assigned to it.

1 gram of Protein = 4 Calories

1 gram of Carbohydrates = 4 Calories

1 gram of Fat = 9 Calories

Many of us live in a macro imbalance where the energy we consume is high on fat and carbs and low on protein. Most processed or restaurant foods reflect this imbalance. Everyone's macros will be slightly different but in general, balanced macros could look like:

35% of calories from protein

40% of calories from carbs

25% of calories from fat

Here's where we do a bit more math. If for example you are in an energy deficit by eating 2,500 calories a day, this is how you calculate how many grams of protein, carbs and fat you should aim for:

Protein

2,500 total calories x .35 of calories from protein = 875 calories per day from protein.

875 calories from protein / 4 calories per 1 gram of protein = 219 grams of protein per day.

A Note On Prioritizing protein

Protein helps repair and build your body's tissues. It drives metabolic reactions, maintains pH and fluid balance, and keeps the immune system strong. It transports and stores nutrients and can act as an energy source. Protein also helps us to maintain lean muscle mass while in a fat loss stage.

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Protein-free and very low protein diets have been found to induce fatty liver, reduce energy digestibility, and decrease lean mass. Research has shown that inadequate protein intake is a global phenomenon from children to aging adults.

To sum it up-we need to prioritize protein!

Carbohydrates

2,500 total calories x .40 of calories from carbohydrates = 1000 calories per day from carbohydrates.

1000 calories from carbohydrates / 4 calories per 1 gram of carbohydrate = 250 grams of carbohydrates per day.

Fats

2,500 total calories x .25 of calories from fats = 625 calories per day from fats.

625 calories from fats / 9 calories per 1 gram of carbohydrate = 250 grams of carbohydrates per day = 69 grams of fats per day.

If you are someone who loves healthy fats, it's okay to shift your percentages around between carbs and fats - so upping the fats and lowering carbs. The main priority is getting adequate protein and ensuring you are eating in a calorie deficit.

Do you see how easily we can individualize our macronutrient intake whether our goal is to maintain, lose or gain weight? When you use MyFitnessPal, you'll see how you can choose your caloric intake, macronutrient breakdown, and number of grams per macronutrient.

Remember that the only way to know for sure that you are in a calorie deficit is to first figure out your average daily caloric intake as explained in step 2 and 3. I've used the example of someone who is in a calorie surplus of 3,000 calories a day but don't assume this applies to you! You might be in the 2,500 range or less and there's only one way to find out-Keep a record.

Step 6

Continue to monitor your caloric intake/macro balance to make sure you're maintaining a caloric deficit. You can use tools like a body weight scale, photos or a change in how your clothes fit to measure fat loss. I know for many people the scale can be triggering and if you can't view it as just data, toss the scale and use other measures for progress. My personal preference is progress photos and clothing size.

Sometimes it can take 3-4 weeks for any change to happen. If after 4 weeks you don't see any progress, consider incrementally increasing your deficit for another few weeks.

Other Reasons You Might Not Be Losing Weight:

- You're not being accurate with your tracking.
- If you've started a new fitness routine at the same time as tracking, you might be building muscle while losing fat which can throw the scale off in the beginning.
- Your macro balance might be off (too much fat, not enough protein).
- You're not weighing yourself at the same time each day (It's normal for weight to fluctuate throughout the day or even week to week if you

have a menstrual cycle)

- You're not being patient enough. Fat loss takes time. We didn't suddenly put on fat overnight, it's an accumulation of choices over many years. Similarly we're not going to lose weight overnight. It takes time to lose weight in a healthy, sustainable way.

Taking the example above, of losing 1lb a week, it will take you at least 10 weeks to lose 10 lbs, 20 weeks to lose 20 lbs, etc. There will also be weeks where the scale doesn't move and it's important to just stick with it. If you continue to see a plateau in fat loss, after a couple weeks, you should slightly increase your deficit or up your step count (activity level in general) to get that metabolism moving again.

Other Considerations for Your Health

What if you have excess fat you want to lose and you do your four day food diary and find that you already have a lower than average daily caloric intake. To decrease your calories any more would put you into dangerous territory for your health. This can feel like a very frustrating place to be. Especially if you've been dieting on and off forever. What are some ways to address this problem?

First of all, if you have been dieting or eating low calories for a long time, it is natural for your body to hold onto excess fat for energy stores because it hasn't been getting the nourishment it needs. This is called metabolic adaptation. There are a few things I would consider in this scenario.

Check your macronutrient balance and make sure you're eating sufficient protein. If you aren't, try to increase

your protein intake and see what happens. There is convincing evidence that a higher protein intake increases thermogenesis and satiety compared to diets of lower protein content.

Increase your calories gradually. I know this might sound scary and counterintuitive but if your body hasn't been receiving enough nutrients, a boost in energy intake can speed up your metabolism again. What you're trying to do is establish new maintenance calories at a higher caloric intake.

Once you've established new maintenance calories at a higher caloric intake you can consider a fat loss phase again. For example, if you've only been eating 1,500 calories a day, try to get your calorie intake up to 2,100 and stay there for a while. Then when you go into a fat loss phase, incrementally begin to decrease calories. You'll likely start to lose fat at even a modest deficit of 2-3 hundred calories because you've overcome the metabolic adaptation that was preventing fat loss.



I'm done dieting. Now what?

How to keep the weight off for the long haul

How often do you see people lose fat and then gain it back almost immediately? Why are people always yo-yo dieting?

If you have hit your weight loss goal and established your new maintenance calories (You're neither gaining or losing weight) there are two things to consider.

The first thing to consider is are you ending your fat loss phase on healthy maintenance calories?

The USDA's 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for women age 31-60 is 1,600-2200 calories per day. For age 60+ the USDA recommends 1600-2000 calories per day. If you have ended your fat loss phase within these caloric recommendations you should try to stay within that amount.

At this point you might have found you enjoy collecting data on your nutrition through MyFitnessPal and want to stick with it. Or you might have become

a pro at eye-balling portion sizes and paying attention to nutritional labels and can maintain your weight this way.

The second thing to consider is have you ended your fat loss phase below the caloric recommendations (This is something more likely to happen in the body building population but also depends on how much metabolic adaptation we encounter in our fat loss phase). In this situation you might need to incrementally increase your calories each week to establish a new healthy maintenance, within the recommended caloric range.

You might gain a little bit of weight in this process but it's not a big deal! For example, if you've lost 25 lbs, gaining a pound or 2 to get into healthy maintenance is perfectly fine and well worth it! That's also why we want to track this process and increase our calories very gradually-by 50-100 calories per week.

Key Points

At the end of a fat loss phase you need to make sure your maintenance calories are at a healthy level

If you ended your fat loss phase on very low calories, you need to gradually bring them up to a healthy maintenance to avoid the cycle of overeating and then restricting

Tracking food intake after a dieting phase can be useful until you've established healthy maintenance

Ideally we move into intuitive eating using the wealth of information we've collected on how to eat healthy, and maintain an energy balance

Last Thoughts on Yo-Yo Dieting

It's often at the end of a fat loss phase where people set themselves up for failure and begin the cycle of yo-yo dieting. This is why we need an exit strategy out of a calorie deficit into healthy maintenance calories. Here are a few scenarios that highlight the importance of this more.

Scenario 1: Restricting Your Favourite Foods

If you've been dieting and restricting all your favorite foods, they'll be one of the first things you go to once you're done dieting. That's why it's so important to pay attention to portion sizes and macros, but allow yourself the foods you love while in a fat loss phase. That way, there isn't the temptation to binge on these pleasure foods when you're done dieting, and trying to maintain fat loss.

Scenario 2: Not Resetting Your Body to Healthy Maintenance Calories After Dieting

We already discussed this above but getting yourself to healthy maintenance calories is essential to stop the cycle of yo-yo dieting. When we aren't at healthy maintenance calories our body doesn't get enough nourishment, and we often respond by overeating, then restricting in a never ending cycle. This is why it's useful to continue tracking calories after a fat loss phase to get yourself into a healthy energy balance or maintenance. As a reminder, being in an energy balance means you are not losing or gaining weight.

At some point on your health journey you will get to the place where you're trained and educated enough about food choices that you can naturally find this balance without tracking. Whether that's making sure to read nutritional labels or practicing portion control, we ultimately want to have the education to stay healthy without rigorously tracking food.

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We're almost there

Scenario 3: Relying Primarily on Exercise to be in an Energy Deficit

If exercise has been your primary tool for weight loss, as I mentioned earlier in this guide, it is not the most efficient and accurate way of measuring energy expenditure. For example, if you've been training to run a marathon and lose a lot of weight by running 6 days a week, is this maintainable for you? Will you continue to train as a marathoner for life? If the answer is yes-Awesome!

However, for many people who start rigorous activity, it is not maintainable. They either burn out or get injured. Furthermore, to be able to perform that degree of activity, they were probably able to be in a deficit on a high number of calories. So what happens if they stop running? They're now suddenly in an energy surplus, and the weight comes back unless they adjust their

energy requirements..

Final Thoughts

I hope this guide has given you the information you need to pursue a healthy fat loss goal and break the cycle of yo-yo dieting.

In combination with the right nutritional information and exercise to maintain health, we can make huge strides on our Get Untuck journey.

My job with GUF 1:1 Personal Training clients is to take the guess work out of optimizing their exercise routine and nutrition, and help them achieve their health and performance goals.

If you're feeling stuck and still don't know where to start, please reach out to me at getunstuckfitness@gmail.com and we can discuss how to Get Unstuck together!



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