

The Fit Femme Project

Reverse Dieting Guide

REVERSE DIETING OVERVIEW

Let's get one thing straight: eating more is not the enemy.

If you've been living on low calories, grinding through workouts, and wondering why your body feels like it's fighting you... it's probably time to reverse diet.

Reverse dieting is the *intentional* increase of food after a dieting phase to restore metabolism, rebalance hormones, and rebuild energy without stacking on unnecessary fat. This is where your body starts healing. This is where strength, sex drive, sleep, and sanity come back online.

Why women reverse diet:

- You've been under-eating for months (or years)
- You've hit a plateau, and nothing is budging
- Your energy, mood, or period is MIA
- You want to build muscle and strength without gaining unnecessary fat
- You are post-show or contest, post-fat loss, or post-burnout and need to come back to home base

This is not just about food. This is about repairing your *relationship* with food. We're not afraid to lift heavier and eat smarter around here.

BULKING VS. MAINTAINING

Let's kill the confusion really quick.

Reverse dieting ≠ bulking.

Reverse is a gentle climb. Bulking is a strategic surplus. Maintenance is the sweet spot in between.

Here's the breakdown:

- **Reverse dieting:** Gradually increasing calories to repair your metabolism and get back to maintenance.
- **Bulking:** A planned, intentional calorie surplus to grow muscle (yes, you may gain some fat too).
- **Maintenance:** The phase most women *skip* because it's not as flashy, but this is where you stabilize, build confidence, and get strong as hell.

Which phase are you in?

- You're reverse dieting if you've just ended a fat loss phase or contest prep.
- You're bulking if you're pushing progressive overload and want muscle gain at all costs.
- You're maintaining if you're eating enough, performing well, and your body is *thriving*.

You don't have to live in a deficit forever. In fact, you shouldn't.

You're not here to shrink... you're here to stabilize and *expand*.

The Phases of Reverse Dieting (*and Learning to Trust the Process*)

This isn't just physical. It's mental reprogramming. Emotional healing. Nervous system regulation.

Let's walk through what really happens...so when it shows up, you don't panic. You *recognize* it as progress.

PHASE 1: The Panic

Mental:

- "I don't want to gain weight."
- "What if this ruins everything I worked for?"
- You're micro-tracking everything. Scale. Bloat. Mirror. Mood.
- Deep fear of letting go of control, because control *felt* like safety.

Emotional:

- Guilt for eating more.
- Anxiety about body changes.

- Mourning the old identity of the “disciplined dieter.”

Physical:

- You may feel bloated, inflamed, or like your clothes fit differently (it’s usually just water and glycogen).
- Hunger might swing wildly at first.
- Sleep, stress, and digestion could be chaotic... because your body is *waking up*.

Mindset Shift:

- This discomfort is data, not danger.
- The fear is proof you're doing something *different*, not something wrong.
- You’re stepping off autopilot and into self-leadership.

PHASE 2: The Negotiation

Mental:

- “Should I just go back to eating less?”
- “Maybe I can reverse *just a little* and still stay lean.”
- You start justifying old habits under the guise of ‘balance.’

Emotional:

- You’re half in, half out. Still checking the scale every morning.
- Still low-key obsessing over how you *used* to look.
- Shame starts creeping in... “Why is this so hard for me?”

Physical:

- Your metabolism is adjusting. Energy is a little higher.
- Digestion might feel sluggish or rev up fast.
- You may start lifting better but still feel soft or uncertain in your body.

Mindset Shift:

- This is the part where most people quit. You won’t.
- You can’t half-heal. You’re either in or repeating the loop.
- Choose *peace* over panic. Choose progress over perfection.

PHASE 3: The Breakthrough

Mental:

- You stop obsessing over food.
- You realize how much mental space was eaten by calorie math.
- You catch yourself smiling more. Living more. Not just “surviving.”

Emotional:

- Food no longer feels like the enemy.
- You start noticing gratitude for what your body *can* do.
- You reclaim softness, rest, and flexibility without guilt.

Physical:

- Strength shoots up. Recovery improves.
- Bloating settles. Your body finds its rhythm.
- Sex drive, sleep, and digestion? Back online.

Mindset Shift:

- You start asking *how do I feel?* instead of *how do I look?*
- You're not afraid of food anymore, because you trust your feedback.
- You realize **this** is what a *regulated* body feels like.

PHASE 4: Finally Uncaged

Mental:

- Food freedom becomes second nature.
- You don't fear travel, brunch, or missing a gym session.
- You're no longer performing fitness, you're *embodying* it.

Emotional:

- You feel stable. Steady. Connected.
- Your self-worth isn't tied to your macros or body fat.
- You don't need external validation, you *know* who you are now.

Physical:

- Your physique may have shifted, but it reflects power, not panic.
- You've got curves, muscle, glow, and ease.
- Your body isn't perfect... it's *yours*. And it's finally on your side.

Mindset Shift:

- You went from fighting your body to working with it.
- You're not scared to eat. You're scared to go back to living half-alive.
- This phase isn't an end. It's a new baseline... one you built with fire and faith.

How You Know You're Making Progress

- Food stops controlling you.
- You lift stronger, recover faster, and feel *alive* again.
- You're not afraid of weight fluctuations...you understand your body's signals.
- You look in the mirror and see *resilience*, not flaws.
- You feel safe in your own skin...even on the days you're bloated, tired, or not "on track."

REVERSE DIETING SUCCESS STORIES

Here's what happens when women stop fearing food and start trusting their bodies.

Lisa's Story: From Ice Cream Cone Legs to Curves She Thought She'd Never Have

Lisa spent years thinking her body was just "genetically stuck"

Her words? "My shape I thought was an ice cream cone... but it's changing"

Once we increased her calories by nearly 500 and supported her metabolism instead of fighting it, everything shifted without unwanted fat gain

She finally saw what most women don't even know is possible

- *Her inner thighs leaned out*
- *Her glutes developed shape and the coveted "side dip"*
- *Her leg sweep came through and revealed curves she never had, even when lean*

She realized that when the body feels safe, it stops clinging to inflammation and starts sculpting

And here's the kicker

"We added nearly 500 calories, and my body looks the same... which means you healed my metabolism"

Lisa didn't just reverse diet. She reversed self-doubt

Now she's training harder, eating more, and for the first time... fully trusting what her body is capable of becoming

Tori's Story: From Scale Panic to Self-Acceptance in the Mirror

Tori used to freak out anytime the scale moved up

But through reverse dieting, education, and emotional coaching, she began to see her body as a project of strength, not punishment

Her shift? Mental first. Then physical. Then full-on spiritual

She shared

"I would normally be freaking out about gaining weight but I'm kind of embracing this new version of me because of your encouragement"

Now

- *She's hitting PRs in the gym*
- *Getting compliments on her arms from strangers*
- *Feeling grounded and more self-expressed than ever before*

*Reverse dieting didn't just restore her metabolism. It restored her relationship with herself
She went from fearing the scale to honoring her strength, curves, and effort
This is what happens when you stop performing fitness and start living it*

Aleecia's Story: From Burnout to Body Rebirth

Aleecia had every reason to quit

Life was heavy. Overwhelm was high. The mirror didn't reflect how hard she'd worked... yet

But she stayed in it. She trusted the process. She showed up for her body like it was her teammate, not her enemy

Her breakthrough didn't just happen overnight. It accumulated.

She said, "I've been feeling the motivation creeping in, made more apparent by these new changes every week. It's been so long since we've cut that I've forgotten how thrilling it is"

And the wins kept coming

- *Glute and leg shape started revealing years of hard work*
- *She felt stronger, sharper, and more excited about training than ever*
- *She visualized herself not just showing up but debuting a whole new package*

And her message to us hit home

"Trust me, I KNOW how hard I've worked over the years, but to see it is another thing"

*That's the magic of reverse dieting done right. It doesn't erase your past work
It reveals it*

These are just three examples. Multiply it by hundreds of women inside The Fit Femme Project who said yes to more food, more strength, and more self-trust.

REVERSE DIETING FAQs

Q: Will I gain fat if I reverse diet?

A: Some water weight? Maybe. But fat gain? Not if it's done right. Strategic increases =

metabolic magic.

Q: How long should I reverse diet?

A: Usually 8–16 weeks minimum, but your body gets the **final** say. We coach based on data, not drama.

Q: Do I have to track during a reverse?

A: At first, yes — to stay consistent and avoid overeating or under-eating. Later, we shift to more freedom if that's the goal.

Q: What if my weight goes up too fast?

A: Then we pause increases, assess digestion, biofeedback, stress, and cardio. This is why coaching matters.

Q: Can I do cardio during a reverse?

A: Yes, but we usually dial it back to reduce overall stress. Your body is repairing, not performing for a gold medal.

Q: What's the difference between a reverse and a recovery diet?

A: Recovery = rapid increase (think post-show only if necessary). Reverse = gradual and sustainable. Both can work; we personalize it.

Q: What if eating more feels mentally hard?

A: That's why you need support. The fear is a symptom of past conditioning. We'll walk you through it, not around it.

Q: How do I know when I've hit maintenance?

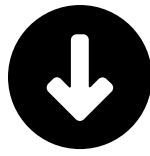
A: Biofeedback is strong. Weight stabilizes. Hunger signals regulate. Energy, mood, and digestion all feel consistent.

Q: What happens after a reverse diet?

A: You chill at maintenance. You enjoy your life. You build. You stop fighting your body and finally feel free.

Okay...NOW YOU'RE READY!

But what if my reverse diet is post-contest?...



POST CONTEST REVERSING

The Show Is Over. The Coaching Is Not.

Stepping off stage does not mean your body is immediately back to normal.

Contest prep asks a lot from a woman physiologically.

For months, your body has been adapting to lower energy intake, higher output, lower body fat, increased training demand and the cumulative stress required to reach a level of leanness that is not meant to be maintained year round.

That adaptation is part of why prep works.

It is also why what happens after the show matters so much.

Post contest reversing is the process of guiding your body out of that highly adapted state and back toward a place where food intake, metabolism, hormones, training performance, digestion, hunger, sleep, menstrual function and day to day energy can begin normalizing.

This phase is not about trying to hold onto your stage body forever.

It is about helping your body transition out of one extreme state without swinging hard into another.

And that is exactly why you still need coaching.

YOUR METABOLISM AFTER PREP

Your metabolism adapts throughout contest prep.

As body weight decreases and energy intake remains low, the body becomes increasingly efficient.

You weigh less, so it naturally costs less energy to move your body.

Your spontaneous movement may decrease without you noticing.

You may fidget less.

You may sit more.

Your body may reduce energy expenditure in places that are not immediately obvious.

Thyroid activity can change.

Leptin can decrease.

Hunger signaling can increase.

Sex hormones can be affected.

Recovery can slow.

Sleep can become more fragile.

Your body is doing what it is designed to do.

It is attempting to conserve energy while continuing to keep you functioning.

That does not mean your metabolism is permanently damaged.

But it does mean we need to respect the metabolic state you are coming out of.

If food intake suddenly increases dramatically while energy expenditure is still lower than it was before prep, your body can regain weight very quickly.

Some of that is expected.

Some of it is necessary.

And some of it can become excessive if the transition is completely unmanaged.

This is where reversing gives us control over the process without trying to control your body.

We increase food based on your response.

We adjust cardio and training.

We watch biofeedback.

We observe how quickly body weight is moving.

We assess hunger.

We assess recovery.

We assess digestion.

We assess energy.

We assess your menstrual cycle.

Then we make the next decision from there.

There is no universal reverse.

Your body tells us what happens next.

WHY THE SCALE CAN MOVE SO FAST AFTER A SHOW

One of the biggest things we want you to understand after a show is that the scale will change.

And it can change quickly.

That does not mean every pound you gain is body fat.

During prep, carbohydrate intake is often lower, food volume may be lower, sodium may be more consistent, inflammation may be different and muscle glycogen can be depleted.

Once food starts increasing again, especially carbohydrates, your muscles begin replenishing glycogen.

Glycogen is stored with water.

That alone can create a noticeable increase in body weight.

Your digestive tract also contains more food.

Sodium intake may be higher.

Fluid balance changes.

Training inflammation can change.

Hormonal fluctuations can affect water retention.

Your menstrual cycle may begin shifting again.

All of these things can move the scale before we are even talking about significant fat gain.

This is why reacting emotionally to the first several pounds is one of the fastest ways to make the post contest process harder.

We expect the body to fill back out.

We expect weight to increase.

We expect your physique to soften.

The goal is not to prevent those things.

The goal is to understand what is happening well enough that we do not overreact to normal physiology.

BODY FAT REGAIN IS PART OF RECOVERY

Stage condition is temporary.

For many women, getting that lean requires the body to operate below the level of body fat it prefers for normal reproductive, endocrine and metabolic function.

That means some body fat regain after a show is not only expected.

It may be necessary.

Your body needs sufficient energy availability to support menstrual function, hormone production, bone health, training recovery, immune function, sleep and normal day to day energy.

Trying to remain at stage leanness indefinitely can work against that recovery.

The purpose of a reverse is not to keep you frozen in your stage body.

It is to help your body move toward a healthier and more functional offseason position while managing that transition intelligently.

BLOOD SUGAR, HUNGER AND APPETITE

Post contest hunger can feel different than normal hunger.

You have spent months in an energy deficit.

Your body knows that.

Leptin, one of the hormones involved in energy balance and fullness signaling, can decrease as body fat and energy availability decline.

Ghrelin and other appetite signals can increase.

Food focus can increase.

Cravings can become stronger.

Your brain may become much more responsive to highly palatable food.

This is biology.

It is not a character issue.

At the same time, moving from a very structured prep diet into extremely inconsistent eating can create larger swings in blood glucose, energy, hunger and satiety.

A large amount of highly processed food may leave you feeling physically full while still feeling mentally driven to continue eating.

Then blood glucose rises.

Insulin rises appropriately to help move glucose into your cells.

Blood glucose later falls.

Hunger may return.

Fatigue may increase.

Digestion may feel off.

Water retention increases.

The scale jumps.

And suddenly the athlete believes something has gone terribly wrong.

That is why we continue using structure after the show.

Not because you need to remain rigid.

Because your hunger and fullness cues may need time to become easier to interpret again.

Regular meals.

Adequate protein.

Carbohydrates distributed throughout the day.

Dietary fat.

Fiber.

Micronutrient rich foods.

Hydration.

Sleep.

Consistent meal timing when possible.

All of these things help create a much more predictable internal environment while your appetite regulation begins settling.

THE RESTRICT AND OVEREAT CYCLE

One of the most important things we want to prevent after a show is the swing between overeating and compensating.

The athlete eats significantly more than planned.

The scale jumps.

She panics.

The next day she dramatically reduces food.

Adds cardio.

Skips meals.

Tries to undo the previous day.

Then hunger becomes even stronger.

Food focus increases.

She overeats again.

And the cycle continues.

At that point, the issue is no longer one meal.

It is the repeated swing between extremes.

This makes it much harder to assess what your body is doing.

Your coach cannot clearly evaluate hunger, digestion, body weight, recovery or metabolic response when every few days looks completely different.

Consistency gives us information.

Information lets us coach.

That is why your job after the show is not perfection.

Your job is to stay communicative and consistent enough that we can continue reading your body.

FEMALE HORMONES AFTER CONTEST PREP

Women deserve more education around this part of the process.

Energy availability directly influences reproductive function.

When energy intake remains too low relative to the amount of energy your body is using, your body may begin reducing resources allocated toward reproduction.

The hypothalamus communicates with the pituitary gland and ovaries through the hypothalamic pituitary ovarian axis.

When the body perceives prolonged energy scarcity, that signaling can become suppressed.

Estrogen may decrease.

Progesterone may decrease.

Ovulation may stop.

Periods may become irregular or disappear entirely.

This is why some women lose their menstrual cycle during prep.

And returning food does not always make that cycle come back immediately.

The body needs evidence that sufficient energy is consistently available again.

That may require more food.

Less cardio.

Improved recovery.

Reduced physiological stress.

And in some women, additional body fat regain.

This process can take time.

We do not force it.

We create the conditions that support it.

Your menstrual cycle is also one of the pieces of biofeedback we continue monitoring during your reverse because it gives us valuable information about how your body is recovering.

THYROID AND ENERGY EXPENDITURE

Thyroid hormones play an important role in metabolic rate.

During prolonged dieting and low energy availability, active thyroid hormone can decrease.

This is another reason some women experience fatigue, lower body temperature, reduced spontaneous movement and a general sense that their body is operating more slowly near the end of prep.

Increasing energy availability and moving out of the deficit helps support recovery from that adapted state.

Again, this is why reversing is bigger than simply adding calories.

We are watching the entire physiological picture.

Food.

Body weight.

Cardio.

Steps.

Training.

Sleep.

Energy.

Digestion.

Menstrual function.

Recovery.

They all matter.

TRAINING DURING THE REVERSE

More food does not automatically mean we need more training.

In many cases, the opposite is true.

Prep can leave the body carrying a large amount of accumulated fatigue.

Training performance may have declined.

Recovery may be slower.

Joints may feel different.

Sleep may be disrupted.

Motivation may fluctuate.

As food increases, performance generally begins improving.

Muscle glycogen increases.

Training quality improves.

Strength can return.

Muscles begin looking fuller.

Recovery between sessions improves.

This is where we start rebuilding.

The goal is not to use every additional calorie as an excuse to increase output.

We want your body to have energy available for repair.

For muscle.

For hormones.

For digestion.

For normal life.

For your next growth phase.

CARDIO DOES NOT STAY AT PREP LEVELS FOREVER

Cardio is another variable we adjust strategically.

You may leave your show doing substantially more cardiovascular work than you were doing earlier in prep or during your offseason.

That level of output is not intended to continue indefinitely.

Cardio will generally begin coming down as food increases and your body begins recovering.

How quickly we reduce it depends on the athlete.

Body weight response matters.

Hunger matters.

Energy matters.

Recovery matters.

The amount of cardio you were doing matters.

Your history matters.

Your next competitive goal matters.

There is no prize for seeing how long you can continue living like you are four weeks out.

The goal is to move you forward.

DIGESTION MAY CHANGE

Your digestive system has also adapted to the foods, quantities and meal structure you were eating during prep.

When food volume increases quickly, digestion may temporarily feel different.

You may feel fuller.

More bloated.

More gassy.

Bowel movements may change.

Your stomach may physically feel heavier.

That does not immediately mean the foods you added are a problem.

Sometimes your digestive system simply needs time to adjust to processing more food again.

This is another reason we increase intake with intention and pay attention to patterns before making reactive changes.

YOUR BODY MAY LOOK DIFFERENT DAY TO DAY

Post contest bodies can fluctuate dramatically.

One morning you may look lean and full.

The next morning you may look softer.

Your stomach may feel distended after a higher food day.

Your legs may hold more water.

Your weight may climb while your waist measurement barely changes.

Your muscles may look dramatically fuller as glycogen returns.

These changes are part of the transition.

Your body is no longer being manipulated toward a single day of peak appearance.

It is returning to normal physiology.

Do not judge the success of your reverse based on whether you look stage ready every morning.

That is no longer the assignment.

YOUR MIND HAS TO REVERSE TOO

The physical transition after a show is only part of the process.

For months, success may have been associated with seeing the scale decrease.

Getting leaner.

Seeing more definition.

Eating less.

Doing more cardio.

Watching your physique become sharper every week.

Then suddenly we ask you to celebrate the opposite direction.

More food.

Less cardio.

A higher scale weight.

A softer physique.

More flexibility.

That can feel mentally disorienting even when you intellectually understand why it needs to happen.

This is where communication with your coach becomes especially important.

Tell us what is happening in your head.

Tell us when body image is getting louder.

Tell us when hunger feels difficult to navigate.

Tell us when you are scared of a scale increase.

Tell us when you feel tempted to compensate.

Tell us when food focus feels unusually high.

Tell us when you feel amazing too.

We cannot coach information we do not have.

The reverse is not just about increasing food.

It is also about helping you build a more stable relationship with the body that carried you through prep.

WHAT WE ARE WATCHING DURING YOUR REVERSE

Your coach is not simply looking at your scale weight.

We are looking at patterns.

We are looking at:

Body weight trends

Rate of weight regain

Hunger

Fullness cues

Food focus

Digestion

Bowel movements

Sleep quality

Energy

Mood

Training performance

Strength

Recovery

Steps

Cardio

Menstrual function

Water retention

Stress

Body image

Adherence

How your physique is responding

How your life is responding

One data point rarely tells us much.

Patterns do.

That is why consistent check ins remain extremely important after your show.

WHY WE DO NOT COPY SOMEONE ELSE'S REVERSE

Two women can step off stage on the same day at the same body weight and need completely different post contest plans.

One may have lost her menstrual cycle.

One may still have it.

One may have extremely high hunger.

One may not.

One may need food increased more aggressively.

Another may need smaller adjustments.

One may tolerate larger carbohydrate increases very well.

Another may need more time for digestion to adapt.

One may need cardio reduced quickly.

Another may benefit from a slower transition.

This is why post contest reversing is coaching.

Not a formula.

We are not trying to make your body follow someone else's timeline.

We are learning what your body needs.

WHAT CAN MAKE THE POST CONTEST PHASE HARDER

The biggest problems usually do not come from one restaurant meal or one celebration after your show.

They come from losing all structure at once.

Large swings between overeating and restriction.

Continuing excessive cardio while trying to recover.

Trying to keep body weight artificially low.

Ignoring severe hunger.

Hiding food intake from your coach.

Avoiding the scale because you are afraid of the number.

Adding extra activity without telling us.

Cutting food because you feel softer.

Comparing your reverse to someone else's.

Ignoring changes in your menstrual cycle, sleep, mood, digestion or recovery.

Every one of these makes the information harder to interpret.

The more clearly we can see what your body is doing, the better we can guide it.

WHAT SUCCESSFUL REVERSING LOOKS LIKE

A successful reverse does not mean gaining zero weight.

It does not mean staying stage lean.

It does not mean never eating something outside of your normal meals.

And it does not mean your body looks exactly the same every week.

Success looks more like this:

Your food intake increases.

Your cardio comes down.

Your training improves.

Your strength returns.

Your muscles look fuller.

Your hunger becomes more manageable.

Your food focus decreases.

Your sleep improves.

Your digestion becomes more predictable.

Your energy returns.

Your menstrual cycle begins normalizing if it was disrupted.

Your body settles into a healthier offseason position.

You begin thinking about your life again instead of thinking about food all day.

You start building instead of continuing to diet.

And eventually, you reach a point where your body is no longer operating like it is still in contest prep.

That is the transition we are coaching.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO

Stay connected to your coach.

Do not wait until something feels completely out of control to tell us.

The information you give us is what allows us to make good decisions.

If hunger suddenly changes, tell us.

If digestion changes, tell us.

If your cycle returns, tell us.

If your cycle disappears, tell us.

If the scale jumps unexpectedly, tell us.

If you are struggling with food thoughts, tell us.

If your training suddenly feels incredible, tell us that too.

There is no prize for silently trying to manage the post contest phase by yourself.

You hired a coach so you would not have to guess.

Let us coach you.

REMEMBER

Your body is not betraying you when it gains weight after a show.

It is responding to months of preparation.

Some weight regain is expected.

Some body fat regain is necessary.

Your hunger may need time to normalize.

Your hormones may need time to recover.

Your metabolism needs adequate energy again.

Your menstrual cycle may need months, not days.

Your body will continue changing.

None of that means you are going backward.

Prep got you to the stage.

The reverse gets you back to a body that can train hard, recover, build muscle, menstruate, sleep, digest food, think clearly and live outside of competition again.

That is part of the sport too.

And we are coaching you through all of it.

