

# Timing, Balancing, and Planning Meals

---

## Lesson Two

Skip breakfast? Eat your heaviest meals at night? You're only setting yourself up for failure. In order to achieve your goals you must practice the skills of timing, balancing, and planning your meals. From eating frequently throughout the day to balancing the amount of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats in each meal, you will achieve results without hunger and experience an abundance of energy in the process.

### TIMING

*Rise and Dine*

#### **Breakfast**

The most important meal of the day! If you are someone who thinks skipping breakfast will help you lose weight, think again. Studies have shown that those who skip breakfast are 4 ½ more likely to be obese than those who don't.

The average 8 hours of sleep burns about 450 calories, therefore your body needs to refuel within 90 minutes of waking. Eating breakfast is like adding kindling to the fire of your metabolism.

If you skip breakfast, your metabolism slows down and your blood sugar drops. As a result, you become hungry, have less energy, and your body will be more likely to store fat. You are just setting yourself up to impulsively snack in the morning - often on high-fat sweets - or to make up for those lost calories by eating extra servings or larger portions later in the day.

Need more proof? A recent study conducted by the National Weight Control Registry at the University of Colorado found that those who had lost and maintained at least 30 pounds for at least one year ate breakfast every morning.

#### **Eat Every Two to Three Hours**

Eating once or twice a day is a sure fire way to lose muscle and lower your metabolism. As you already know, less muscle mass and a lower metabolism is not the way to get to your goal. To control your appetite, regulate your blood sugar level, and build lean muscle mass, you must eat five to six times a day.

Understanding how your body's blood sugar levels rise and fall explains why you need to continually refuel your body. Normally when you eat, your blood sugar, or glucose levels, will raise, level out, and then drop in about three hours. If you don't eat again within three hours or so, your blood sugar begins to drop even further. If your blood sugar drops too low, your body starts kicking in an emergency mechanism to make sure there's enough sugar around for brain, heart, and other organ function. It does this by "catabolizing" lean muscle mass. In other words, your body starts eating your muscle for energy. This will only slow down your metabolism; you'll burn the muscle you're trying to build which sabotages your body's ability to burn fat.

#### **No time to eat?**

Think again. Skipping meals will only sabotage your ability to stick to your nutrition plan. Missing a normally scheduled meal will leave you hungry and increase the likelihood of making a poor food choice. As the day wears on, lack of proper meal timing will most likely cause you to become so hungry that you will abandon your plan. Now it becomes a matter of eating anything just to satisfy your hunger! Eating frequently decreases hunger, making you less likely to binge.

Eating five to six meals a day also provides your body with the energy it needs to contend with daily activities and stress. Digesting food requires energy, which cranks up your metabolism. So, the more frequently you eat the more calories you burn. The bottom line is you'll maintain consistent energy levels and turn your body into an efficient, fat burning machine.

### **Pre-Workout Fuel**

If you're spending time exercising and putting energy into your workouts, it only makes sense that you eat the right foods before your workouts if you really want to reach your goals. Yet many people exercise on an empty stomach. By not eating, your body uses muscle protein for fuel because it doesn't have enough carbohydrates to burn. If you start your workout well-fueled, your body will burn a combination of the carbohydrates stored in your muscles and the fat stored in your fat cells.

How many times have you stopped exercising because you felt dizzy, shaky, or just plain tired? That's because you didn't have enough fuel to go the distance. Have a small meal about an hour before your workout. Choose to eat a small, easily digested meal composed of complex carbs. You will have the energy to workout longer and more intense and you won't experience [low blood sugar](#) jitters and dizziness.

Eat smart before a workout, particularly with a food that supplies loads of carbohydrates, this will provide a host of benefits. Your muscles receive an infusion of energy to help maximize the results of your workout, and your entire body (especially your brain) gets the fuel and nutrients it needs for daily living.

### **Replenish your Muscles**

It's important to make the right choices after you exercise. Otherwise, your hard work won't yield the results you want. After a workout, your body's energy levels are considerably depleted and must be replenished.

Eating a properly balanced meal 45 to 60 minutes after your workout does two important things. One, it helps your body to recover quickly, which is needed for muscle growth because of tissue repairs and for replacing lost glycogen in the muscles. And two, it helps muscle growth.

A liquid meal replacement shake or another form of carbohydrate/protein based meal that can be quickly absorbed is ideal. Having a shake is an excellent strategy. Not only are liquids easily digested and absorbed at a faster rate, but after exercising there is a window of about an hour when your ability to absorb nutrients is exceptionally high. After that time your uptake of nutrients returns to normal, so don't miss the opportunity to feed your hungry muscles.

When you help your body recover from the stress imposed upon it (exercise) by ingesting the proper nutrients at the right time, the quicker you will be able to affect body composition change (gain muscle, lose fat, or both). You will automatically help your body "bounce back" and you will see results in less time.

## **BALANCING**

### **Give Your Body What it Needs**

Eating a meal that is balanced to include carbohydrates, proteins, and fats gives your body everything it needs to function efficiently and feel its best.

**CARBOHYDRATES:** *The main fuel source.* Carbs supply our bodies with energy. Without an adequate supply of carbs, your body goes into carbohydrate

deprivation. This is called a state of ketosis (our body is using protein “muscle” as energy). This is not good to be in for long because it will rob the body of muscle tissue in an effort to create energy. Carbs come in two forms: simple and complex. Simple carbs, for quick energy, like fruit juice. Complex carbs are used for timed-release and lasting energy. Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains are good sources of complex carbs and make you feel satisfied after a meal.

**PROTEIN:** *The building blocks of muscle.* Next to water, protein is the most abundant material in the human body. While consuming enough protein is essential for growth and development of the body, eating huge amounts will not build muscle. In order to build muscle, protein must be consumed with enough carbohydrate calories to provide the body with energy. It's important to eat the right amount and the right kind of protein to get the results you want. Choose lean cuts of meat, fish, low fat milk, nuts or beans.

**FATS:** *The most misunderstood nutrient.* Your body needs fats to manufacture hormones, for proper brain function and for healthy joint lubrication. In addition, fats release energy slowly, providing a necessary feeling of fullness by prolonging digestion. Eliminate fats completely from your diet, and watch your energy/strength levels go down as well as your sex drive. Also your skin will get dry and your hair will lose its shine. Just be sure to eat healthy, unsaturated fats. Look for them in nuts, fish oils, and seeds.

Each meal should contain a portion of each of the macronutrients. Eating the recommended balance creates a favorable environment that leads to muscle growth and fat loss.

### **Go for Variety**

Eating a variety of foods is the secret of happy weight management. According to

several studies, those who had difficulty adopting a nutrition plan ate the same foods week in and week out. Don't make the same mistake! Before you sit down to make out your grocery list, plan to buy at least one new food.

When you think about variety, think about eating the full rainbow assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables on a regular basis. If you use this tactic, you won't become bored and tempted to choose high-calorie snacks and you'll improve your nutritional intake at the same time

### **Drink Plenty of Water**

Just as important to eating the right foods, is keeping yourself adequately hydrated. Water is by far the most abundant substance in your body. Without water, you would not survive very long. Most people who want to get into shape, almost always underestimate the value of water.

Water is good for the following reasons:

- 1) Over 65% of your body is composed of water
- 2) Water cleanses your body from toxins and pollutants that would get you sick.
- 3) Water is needed for all of the complex chemical reactions that your body needs to perform on a daily basis. Processes such as energy production, muscle building, and fat burning, require water. A lack of water would interrupt all of these processes.
- 5) Water helps lubricate the joints.
- 6) Water helps control your appetite. Sometimes when you feel hungry after a good meal this sensation indicates a lack of water. Drinking water at that time would take the craving away.
- 7) Cold water increases your metabolism.

Water is the single most important factor in losing and maintaining your weight. It helps the body feel full, while also

suppressing your appetite and helping your body metabolize stored fat. Water maintains muscle tone by giving muscles their natural ability to contract and prevents dehydration during exercise.

Try to drink at least 64 ounces each day. That is actually the minimum recommendation. During exercise of even mild intensity, your body requires more water (2 cups every 15 minutes).

### ***Bonus Fat Loss Rule:***

Go to bed early and get adequate rest every night. Two reasons: Lack of sleep increases the hormone *cortisol*, which is a hormone that stores fat and burns muscle (in other words, it does the exact opposite of what you are trying to accomplish), and decreases your testosterone levels (which need to be high in order to keep your fat burning/muscle gaining processes going at full speed). While sleep requirements vary, seven to nine hours of sleep is generally a good rule of thumb. The probability of succumbing to late night cravings increases exponentially for every late hour of the day that you stay awake.

## **PLANNING**

### **Be Prepared**

Obviously it takes a good amount of planning, preparation, and persistence to get into the habit of eating this frequently. You must prepare your food well ahead of time.

No, it's certainly not "easy" - but once you get into the habit of preparing your meals in advance and eating delicious, healthy food every few hours you'll see some amazing changes.

Plan your meals and snacks the night before or first thing in the next morning. Be prepared and once this is done often enough it will become a healthy habit.

### **Pack your Lunch**

One thing that totally kills a sound nutrition plan is going to work. Work, however, is not the culprit. The culprit is Lunch Hour. If you do not pre pack your meal, lunch comes along and you will end up going to the nearest fast food joint and exposing yourself to temptation. Therefore, the best way to stay on your nutrition plan (and also avoid losing meals) is to pre pack everything in such a way that when a meal time comes, it is relatively easy to have access to the food.

### **Cook in Bulk**

After a long, hard day at work, the last thing you probably feel like doing is going home to slave over a hot stove to cook a meal. Whether you cook for yourself or prepare meals for your family, you know how much time it takes to prepare and get food ready each and every day. And you already know that [eating at restaurants](#) may be convenient, but they're not an ideal option if you're trying to eat healthily, as meals can be high in calories and have poor nutrient profiles.

The best way to reduce the tedious time spent preparing meals and still stick to a healthy eating plan is to pick one day per week to plan and prepare your meals for the entire week. That way, you don't need to worry about cooking every night. All it takes is a couple of hours of planning, and cooking can be one fewer thing that you'll have to worry about in your busy day.

Keep your meal strategy simple by cooking a lot of healthy food (i.e. chicken breast, steamed vegetables, brown rice, etc.) one day per week. Begin with your menu plan. Be easy on yourself and plan at least three of the five meals that use the same food as a main ingredient. Measure out and divide up your daily meals into Tupperware containers for individual storage.

All it takes is a little planning and a dedicated day once a week to get your plan on track. Cooking and preparing foods shouldn't be a time-consuming hassle. By planning your week and preparing your foods ahead of time, you won't have to rely on takeout food or make unhealthy choices at the end of your busy day.

### **Portable Snacks**

Eating is no longer an activity that stands alone. How many times this past week have you eaten on the run? No place is safe either – the car, your desk, maybe even the shower! Your time is strapped, your body is tired, and you need food that's easy to grab 'n' go. It is very easy to forget eating healthy.

You can make your own healthy snacks portable and easy for on-the-go eating. Prepared ahead of time, they can be popped into a lunch bag or purse. You'll also be thankful that you've saved yourself the cash that normally goes to vending machines or convenient stores. Your body will be grateful as well.

- Celery sticks with peanut butter and several raisins on top
- Rice cakes with peanut butter
- Low-fat cheese cubes
- Hardboiled eggs
- Fruit yogurt cup
- Trail mix
- Vegetable sticks with a little packet of dip
- Yogurt and granola
- Box of raisins or other dried fruit
- Apples, bananas, strawberries and a handful of nuts
- Whole-wheat crackers and low-fat string cheese
- Fruit smoothie in a thermos
- Tuna and cottage cheese in mini-containers

Set aside a few minutes each week to think about the meals you'll make the next week. Ask yourself three questions...

- (1) Which foods do I need from the store to make these meals?
- (2) What other foods do I need to eat healthy breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks?
- (3) What foods do I already have in the house? Make your shopping list from your answers to these questions.

### **Make a Shopping List**

Grocery stores are very tempting places. They are carefully designed by experts to persuade you to buy. So unless you know what you are looking for, you can easily end up buying a ton of items you didn't plan for. Before stepping foot in the grocery store, plan out what types and amounts of foods you will eat throughout the week by making a shopping list. This will help you to comply with your nutrition plan.

Never shop for groceries on an empty stomach. Hunger increases temptation. If you are hungry when you shop for food, you will be led astray.

Shop the outside aisles. Grocery stores are designed with the four basic food groups on and around the perimeter. If you stick to the outside aisles, you'll find produce, bakery, dairy and meat -- the most natural, unprocessed foods which are best for your health. Avoid going up and down the aisles where processed "convenience" foods dwell to tempt you away from healthy foods.

Timing, balancing, and planning your meals can help to avoid energy swings and non-productive food choices. Incorporating a few simple nutrition strategies will make a dramatic impact on your fitness goals. Remember, you already eat every day, so it's not all that difficult to add a little structure to the routine, especially when the results are noticeable.

---

**COMPLETE .....**

The following grocery list so that shopping becomes as simple as checking off the items. This way, you have spent your time, money, and energy wisely and your reward is eating foods you love and make you look and feel great!

<b>Grocery List</b>	
<b>Starch</b>	
<b>Fruit</b>	
<b>Milk</b>	
<b>Vegetable</b>	
<b>Meat</b>	
<b>Fat</b>	
<b>Healthy Snacks</b>	

**PLAN....**

Four balanced snacks that you would eat using the food exchanges listed below.

Example:

1 Starch and 1 Fat

½ bagel (1 oz.) and 1 Tbs. Cream cheese

1) 1 Starch and 1 Fat

---

---

2) 1 Starch and 1 Fruit

---

---

3) 1 Starch and 1 Low Fat Milk

---

---

4) 1 Starch and 1 Medium Fat Meat

---

---

**LIST...**

Three snack foods you will keep available at each of the following places.

At work (school):

---

---

At home:

---

---

In the car:

---

---

In gym bag/purse:

---

---

---

---

## TAKE INVENTORY....

Your environment supports your habits. If there's nothing bad in the house to eat, chances are you're going to eat properly. Take a moment to survey what items you have in your pantry and refrigerator. What can be discarded? What can be replaced?

### **Pantry:**

Carbohydrates on Hand:

---

---

Replace With:

---

---

Proteins on Hand:

---

---

Replace With:

---

---

Vegetables/Fruits on Hand:

---

---

Replace With:

---

---

Healthy Fats on Hand:

---

---

### **Refrigerator:**

Carbohydrates on Hand:

---

---

Replace With:

---

---

Proteins on Hand:

---

---

Replace With:

---

---

Vegetables/Fruits on Hand:

---

---

Healthy Fats on Hand:

---

---

## **Eating before a workout takes planning**

Schedule your meals depending on whether you work out in the morning, during lunch, or after work. Plan the time of the day you will eat each meal and an example of typical foods you will eat.

Meal 1

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Meal 2

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Meal 3

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Meal 4

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Meal 5

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Meal 6

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Foods: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

