

EAT CLEAN TO LOSE FAT

Craig Ballantyne, C.S.C.S

If you've reached a fat loss plateau, it's time to reevaluate your eating habits. Take a look at your calorie compliance. Are you getting 90% of your calories from the right sources*? Remember, you can't be doing everything RIGHT and still be getting the WRONG results. No workout, no matter how good, can trump the domination of Dominos, the march of McDonalds, or the King of the Burger. You absolutely, positively, must be eating:

- a) In a caloric deficit (that means fewer calories in than are needed to maintain your weight)
- b) Lots of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables
- c) No processed carbohydrates (nothing from a bag or a box)
- d) Protein at every meal
- e) 5-6 small meals per day rather than 2-3 big meals
- f) Fiber-rich nuts as snacks
- g) No sugar

That's the definition of good nutrition. Think about this. How fast can you eat a Big Mac, fries, and a soda. 10 minutes? 5 minutes? 3 minutes? Now compare that to how long it would take to burn off those calories (all 1200+ of them) by running. It would probably be the better part of 2 hours!

If muscles were made from chips and beer, we'd look huge. But they aren't, and we don't--unless you count that sack o' fat up front and dead center.

If not Doritos and double bock, what are the "right sources"? Seven foods are on the list: eggs, almonds, olive oil, salmon, steak, yogurt and water. Add these ingredients to your stomach and faithfully follow a cardio/weight lifting program and you can lose the excess fat for good.

***Eggs: The Perfect Protein**

How they make muscle: The protein in eggs has the highest biological value--a measure of how well it supports your body's protein needs--of any food, including our beloved beef. Calorie for calorie, you need less protein from eggs than you do from other sources to achieve the same muscle-building benefits. But you have to eat the yolk. In addition to protein, it also contains vitamin B12, which is necessary for fat breakdown and muscle contraction. (And no, eating a few eggs a day won't increase your risk of heart disease.)

How they keep you healthy: Eggs are vitamins and minerals over easy; they're packed with riboflavin, folate, vitamins B6, B12, D, and E, and iron, phosphorus, and zinc.

***Almonds: Muscle Medicine**

How they make muscle: Crunch for crunch, almonds are one of the best sources of alpha-tocopherol vitamin E--the form that's best absorbed by your body. That matters to your muscles because vitamin E is a potent antioxidant that can help prevent free-radical damage after heavy workouts. And the fewer hits taken from free radicals, the faster your muscles will recover from a workout and start growing. How many almonds should you munch? Two handfuls a day should do it. A Toronto University study found that men can eat this amount daily without gaining any weight.

How they keep you healthy: A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that those men who consumed the most vitamin E--from food sources, not supplements--had a 67 percent lower risk of Alzheimer's disease than those eating the least vitamin E.

***Salmon: The Growth Regulator**

How it makes muscle: It's swimming with high-quality protein and omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3's can decrease muscle-protein breakdown after your workout, improving recovery. This is important, because to build muscle you need to store new protein faster than your body breaks down the old stuff.

How it keeps you healthy: By reducing your risk of heart disease and diabetes. Researchers at Louisiana State University found that when overweight people added 1.8 grams of DHA--an omega-3 fatty acid in fish oil--to their daily diets, their insulin resistance decreased by 70 percent in 12 weeks.

***Yogurt: The Golden Ratio**

How it makes muscle: Even with the aura of estrogen surrounding it, yogurt is an ideal combination of protein and carbohydrates for exercise recovery and muscle growth. Buy regular--not sugar-free--and add your own fruit. The extra carbohydrates from the fruit will boost your blood levels of insulin, one of the keys to reducing post-exercise protein breakdown.

How it keeps you healthy: Three letters: CLA. Yogurt is one of the few foods that contain conjugated linoleic acid, a special type of fat shown in some studies to reduce body fat.

***Beef: Carvable Creatine**

How it makes muscle: More than just a piece of charbroiled protein, beef is also a major source of iron and zinc, two crucial muscle-building nutrients. Plus, it's the number-one food source of creatine--your body's energy supply for pumping iron--2 grams for every 16 ounces.

For maximum muscle with minimum calories, look for "rounds" or "loins"-- meat cuts that are extra-lean. Or check out the new "flat iron" cut. It's very lean and the second most tender cut of beef overall.

How it keeps you healthy: Beef is a storehouse for selenium. Stanford University researchers found that men with low blood levels of the mineral are as much as five times more likely to develop prostate cancer than those with normal levels.

***Olive Oil: Liquid Energy**

How it makes muscle: The monounsaturated fat in olive oil appears to act as an anticatabolic nutrient. In other words, it prevents muscle breakdown by lowering levels of a cellular protein called "tumor necrosis factor- α ", which is linked with muscle wasting and weakness. And while all olive oil is high in monos, try to use the extra-virgin variety whenever possible; it has a higher level of free-radical-fighting vitamin E than the less chaste stuff.

How it keeps you healthy: How doesn't it? Olive oil and monounsaturated fats have been associated with everything from lower rates of heart disease and colon cancer to a reduced risk of diabetes and osteoporosis.

***Water: The Muscle Bath**

How it makes muscle: Whether it's in your shins or your shoulders, muscle is approximately 80 percent water. **Even a change of as little as 1 percent** in body water can impair exercise performance and adversely affect recovery. For example, a 1997 German study found that protein synthesis occurs at a higher rate in muscle cells that are well hydrated, compared with dehydrated cells. English translation: The more parched you are, the slower your body uses protein to build muscle. Not sure how dry you are? Weigh yourself before and after each exercise session. Then drink 24 ounces of water for every pound lost.

How it keeps you healthy: Researchers at Loma Linda University found that men who drank five or more 8-ounce glasses of water a day were 54 percent less likely to suffer a fatal heart attack than those who drank two or fewer.