



Fueling Body Builders

Fueling Your Sport

- Competitive body builders spend a lot of time in the gym each day: about 1½ hours during the off-season and 2 to 3 hours during precompetition.
- There are usually four phases in the body builder's diet: muscle-building, tapering, cutting, and maintenance. Your need for calories, carbohydrates, protein, and fat will vary with the phase and amount of training.

Muscle-Building Diet

The muscle building phase begins after you finish resting from the previous competitive season. In this phase, you need:

- 23.6 to 27.3 calories per pound of body weight per day (52 to 60 calories/kg/day)
- 4.1 grams of carbohydrate per pound per day (9 g/kg/day)
- 0.64 grams of protein per pound per day (1.4 g/kg/day)

Tapering Diet

The "tapering phase" usually starts about 12 weeks before competition. At this time, you aim to decrease body fat and define muscle mass. You need:

- 17.3 calories per pound of body weight per day (38 calories/kg/day)
- 2.7 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (6 g/kg/day)
- 0.82 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day (1.8 g/kg/day)

Cutting Diet

You may want to use a cutting diet if the tapering phase did not meet all of your goals for body composition. In this phase, you need:

- 15 calories per pound of body weight per day (33 calories/kg/day)

- 2.3 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (5 g/kg/day)
- 0.82 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day (1.8 g/kg/day)

Maintenance Diet

Use a maintenance diet during the off-season so you won't gain too much body fat. In this phase, you need:

- 20 calories per pound of body weight per day (44 calories/kg/day)
- 3.6 grams of carbohydrate per pound of body weight per day (8 g/kg/day)
- 0.55 grams of protein per pound of body weight per day (1.2 g/kg/day)

Fluid Needs

- Sport drinks can help provide fluid as well as carbohydrate and electrolytes during long and intense workouts.
- Eliminating fluids to lose weight is not a safe practice. Fluids will not make you bloat, so drink enough fluid during training and competition.
- Two to three hours before hitting the gym, drink 2 to 3 cups of fluid.
- If you work out early in the morning, grab a large bottle of water or sport drink and drink it before you get to the gym.
- During your workout, take frequent water breaks between sets. Keep a sport bottle with you to remind yourself to drink.
- Choose sport drinks to replace sodium lost in sweat. Sport drinks provide fluids, electrolytes and carbohydrates.

Supplements Commonly Used by Body Builders

There is a whole industry that advertises dietary supplements to body builders. The products come with big promises and even bigger price tags. But no dietary supplement can take the place of a good training and competition diet.

Supplements that may be useful to body builders include the following:

- Creatine, at doses of 3 to 5 grams per day, to improve training. Creatine is not recommended for individuals younger than 18 years of age.
- Protein powders and shakes to provide calories and protein during the cutting phase of training.
- Vitamin E, at doses of 100 to 400 milligrams per day, to help reduce muscle soreness. Vitamin E is found in high-fat foods. Body builders may not get enough vitamin E from food during the phases of training when they eat less fat.

Top Three Nutrition Tips for Improving Performance

1. Don't go to extremes. Severely restricting calories, carbohydrates, and fluids can leave you with low blood glucose, low blood pressure, and dizziness. Many body builders have passed out during and after a competition from lack of food and fluid. Instead of extreme dieting, stick to the recommendations for a maintenance diet in the off-season so you enter the competitive season in good shape.

2. Question the hype about the latest dietary supplements. No dietary supplement can change your genetic makeup to allow you to add more muscle or block dietary fat from being absorbed. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

3. Get nutrients from foods, not supplements. Body builders often steer clear of fiber-containing fruits and vegetables to avoid feeling bloated and to keep their abs flat. But it is important to eat fruits and vegetables because they are the best source of vitamins that keep you strong and healthy. Supplements can help you increase vitamin, mineral, and protein intake, but they are not a replacement for food. You spend a lot of time making the outside of the body look good, but you also must remember that the foods you eat will help your insides stay healthy.

Nutrition Prescription:

- _____ calories per day
- _____ grams of carbohydrate per day
- _____ grams of protein per day
- _____ grams of fat per day
- _____ cups of fluid per day

Special concerns: