

Diet Help

October 12, 2018 | 10 upvotes | by [ChokingDownRP](#)

Age 40 6'4" 245lbs (down from 283), 21% BF (Omron handheld scanner).

Unplugged in January, life is mostly good these days, It's like I've learned Kung-fu like Neo. Wife and others are responding positively to physical and attitude changes.

Physical Gainz came easily at first, I was seemingly losing fat and building muscle simultaneously just by lifting and cutting out garbage foods...for a **little** while (maybe 2 months or so). Noob gainz stalled & I decided to focus on eating better, losing weight. That worked for a while, though muscle gainz slowed or stalled. Weight loss has also stalled again. over the past couple of weeks. I understand that you cannot burn fat & build muscle simultaneously over the long run. Do I need to alternate between cutting weight and building muscle?

I want to be lean, not the fat guy with muscles...what is my best approach going forward - focus on cutting weight, or focus on heavy lifting & building muscle? What are the best resources available to dial in my diet and control macros? I want to make sure my diet is dialed in to optimally support me reaching my goals as efficiently as possible.

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Comments

2ndal • 10 points • 12 October, 2018 12:10 PM*

Don't get caught in the haze of pop culture diet mystique. It's very simple. Calorie in, calorie out. If you're not losing weight (aka fat) you're eating too many calories.

Calculate your TDEE. I prefer this calculator. For an even more accurate TDEE, use this spreadsheet which tracks your calorie intake and weight over time. Note that it takes about 3-4 weeks of accurate tracking with this spreadsheet before you get a TDEE you can trust, but assuming you track calories correctly you can count on this method to be very accurate. Ignore the exercise modifiers and calculate everything with a sedentary lifestyle, unless you're a professional athlete.

Once you know your TDEE, eat at a deficit. Yes, your muscle and strength gains might suffer, but your goal should be to maintain there, not gain, during a cut.

Your first chunk of weight loss might take a while if you're continuing to lift at maintenance because you could be still building muscle. But push through that and eventually muscle gain will level out in accordance to your caloric intake and your scale numbers will drop along with your body fat.

Also don't rely solely on the scale to gauge success. Measure your body with a measuring tape in all of the right places and track that over time, too. (I suggest the Navy method of body fat calculation.) You will notice that often your weight changes little while your body geometry does significantly. Before, during, and after pictures help as well.

Track your daily caloric intake on a week-by-week basis. For example if your TDEE is 1700, and you're looking to cut a pound of fat per week, you're going to want to eat 1200 calories a day or 8400 per week. (That's a 500 calorie deficit per day, or 3500 per week: the same amount as a pound of fat.) Tracking the daily intake over the week nets you better insight into caloric averages and helps you regulate your daily input based on weekly progress.

It's also important to recalculate your TDEE on a semi-regular basis. This is because when you lose weight, your body expends less energy at a resting state, therefore you need less calories, which means you will lose weight at a slower rate unless you adjust your intake in accordance with your lower weight and lower TDEE.

If you're not losing weight it means you're eating too much. This is usually because of one of two reasons: 1) Your calculated TDEE is incorrect or 2) you're not weighing and tracking everything you eat correctly.

If you don't know what your TDEE is, if you do not have a food scale, if you're not weighing everything, if you're not tracking everything (don't forget cooking oils) in MyFitnessPal or LoseIt! then you can not expect to do this correctly. You must do all of that.

Finally, it takes time so be fucking patient. It's hard losing fat while continuing a strength program. You're lifting heavy and you're fucking hungry, and it's tough to eat at larger deficits which yield faster results. This makes it a long, slow burn; I like to think of it more as a lifestyle change than a diet or cut.

Yes, it's a pain in the ass, yes it takes time, but anything worth doing comes at a cost. It gets easier as you go and eventually becomes second nature.

If you're doing all of this and still not seeing the results you want, find a group of nutritional scientists and ask them to study you because your body works like no other human body on planet earth.

Good luck. We're all counting on you.

DeplorableRay • 1 point • 13 October, 2018 01:32 AM

I think the calorie in calorie out mantra is a good starting point. To really be successful, you need to understand nutrition. 2000 calories of steak and eggs are not the same thing as 2000 calories of sour patch kids.

Read up on intermittent fasting, glycemic indexes, and insulin responses and you'll find what diet will work for your particular body's needs.

And sugar is poison. Literally. None of your calories should be sugar when you are cutting fat.

2ndal • 1 point • 13 October, 2018 01:07 PM

Yes that may be true but anything outside of CICO is just a distraction for 99.9% of people who are trying to cut fat. If you're at the elite level that stuff begins to matter more. When you're just trying to have a healthy BMI or trying to reduce body fat by some percentage points, CICO is what you need to focus on.

And if you think eating a dinner of candy is okay just because it's within your calorie range then you're a fucking moron who isn't going to be able to follow even CICO so it's not worth the finger energy to address those folks. (Though they'll probably still lose weight.)

BobbyPeru • 4 points • 12 October, 2018 03:09 AM

Focus on maintaining the muscle you have built and cut the fat. You will know you are keeping the muscle if you are losing weight and your strength remains constant.

Then, when you get 5 pounds below your ideal weight (factor in lost water weight), start doing bulking:cutting cycles. During cutting, practice intermittent fasting, at least 16 hours.

ThrowTheEgg • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 05:21 AM

that's all exactly right and good advice. The bit i never quite get though, once well underway with the cut, and strength/weight is either slipping or super hard to maintain - when is a bit of muscle loss *too* much? When do you go, "i've done enough, the muscle is now being eaten into and time to reverse back upward?" Because I do lose strength, eventually, as I cut further....?

BobbyPeru • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 08:13 AM

i've done enough, the muscle is now being eaten into and time to reverse back upward?" Because I do lose strength, eventually, as I cut further....?

You need to replenish your glucose and up your protection when you hit this point. You will gain a few pounds of water and glucose weight, but then you can continue your cut. If you are at that point, shoot for 1 lb a week..

Example: Monday (after replenish): weight 195

Tues: 194

Wed: 193

Thurs: 192

Fri- sun: ho back up to 194 (a pound less than week before)

Mon: 194

Tues: 193

Wed: 192

Thursday: 191

Fri-sun: up to 193

See what I'm saying? When you are getting near target? A pond a week is a challenge? So your body needs to be replenished once a week

DeplorableRay • 1 point • 13 October, 2018 01:24 AM

I think you want to build muscle before you cut. It's easier to build muscle and lift heavy with a little bit of fat on you.

BobbyPeru • 1 point • 13 October, 2018 02:40 AM

OP has already done that

JudgeDoom69 • 3 points • 12 October, 2018 02:54 PM

245lbs (down from 283)

Great progress!

You should use the MyFitnessPal app to track your macros and caloric intake.

Don't drink any calories. Drink only water or zero calorie beverages.

Cut out all alcohol.

Don't eat white bread or sugary foods.

zurgenfloggin • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 03:19 AM

Keep lifting but cut fat until 10% to 12%. use the Navy body fat method instead of the hand held thing. Focus on your waist measurement -- over 40 inches is high risk, below 37 inches is much lower risk medically.

Know that your strength/muscle gains will be curtailed while you do this, but you won't lose muscle (not nearly as much) if you keep lifting. When you get frustrated that your muscles aren't getting bigger and your strength isn't going up tell your self not to get fat next time.

I went through this, I got stronger for 3 months and went from ~28% BF to 19% BF (229lbs to 208lbs). Took a 6 week breather at maintenance calories then went back into cutting to 12% BF (189 lbs). The drop from 19% to 15% seemed much more dramatic than the 28% to 19%. You look much better each pound of fat you lose after 20%. If your blood #s are high now they will all go down (cholesterol, blood pressure, triglycerides). Hell even my testosterone went up from low 200s to 400s. Dropping from 15% to 12% was even more dramatic. I can see abs at 12% but not a six pack. My face starts looking bony and weird at 10% and lower, so I am fine at 12%.

When you add carbs back in after your cut your lifts will go up. It's kind of amazing.

ChokingDownRP[S] • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 03:41 AM

Tell your self not to get fat next time.

I like this, I talk shit to myself all the time. I lift in a mirror and channel all of my anger and frustrations into my lifting. It's a great tool for motivation. When I run and start to feel tired, I call myself a fat ass to keep myself going.

Thanks for the advice/encouragement.

Sepean • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 05:58 AM

This is a very thorough, no nonsense guide to everything on setting up your diet <https://rippedbody.com/books/>

redwall92 • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 12:31 PM

I'm a CICO believer. I'll post my personal take on your question which I see as a basically a question of priority... 1) Lift to reach some certain lifting goal OR 2) Cut to reach some certain weight goal.

I had the same question. Still do at some level. Wish I had taken a different track earlier in my path.

I'm 6'2" started at 230lb. Started with SL 5x5 just the bar. Never been to a gym. Played rqbball a lot - 3x a week. Rqbball was my priority over lifting. Cutting weight was my priority over lifting. My lifts ... especially my bench ... went up slowly.

I did build muscle, up the weights, and get down to 190 over the period of about a year or so. Squat got up to 315x3. Shoulder and arm injuries kept the bench and upper body moving forward.

My lifting goals are body weight bench and 1.5 body weight squat.

My weight goals are a looks thing. Pretty sure <15% bf will get me the look I want. I did a DexaScan that had me at 18% when I weighed 187 while also injured and doing less in the gym and eating at a larger deficit.

Injuries cleared up. I have still managed to add weight while eating at a deficit. I have used MyFitnessPal since the beginning. Currently I'm at 193lb and benched 190 just this week - my new PR. Squatting 285x3 fairly easily. My goal is to get down to 190lb while keeping my bench at 190 - unless I happen to bench 195 and check my goal box that way.

Once I hit my goals in the gym it will be decision time for me as to how to spend my time there going forward. I dropped rqbball for boxing earlier this year. Rqbball is a huge calorie deficit for me. Boxing not as much. But boxing has been great for me and for my 15yo son. However, I want to pick rqbball back up early next year.

IMO I've split my focus too much - leaned towards losing weight more than adding muscle. Wish I could go back and start again while eating more at maintenance and pushing harder to add to the bar in the gym. Hit my goals on bench and squat. Then do a serious cut while attempting to maintain the muscle to get the look I want. Pretty sure I could have shortened my path by being more intentional about adding muscle and slowing the roll on weight loss.

Live and learn... Your path is yours. Track your calories and macros. Get enough protein and sleep.

Do you have clear goals for your lifts and looks?

[deleted] • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 03:33 PM

At 245, even at 6'4, you're probably pretty fat. Unless you're an NFL tight end, that size makes it seem that you're a big dude. Good work on loss thus far.

Keep cutting. Figure out your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure), take off 500cals of that, and track your food in MyFitnessPal. The weight will come off if you are dedicated and continue tracking. But keep lifting heavy to preserve what muscle you have...you're going to lose strength as you lose weight (and muscle) but don't pussy out. Go as hard as you safely can.

ChokingDownRP[S] • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 03:47 PM

At 245, even at 6'4, you're probably pretty fat.

No question i'm still fat. I stopped patting myself on the back for making gainz thus far...lots of work left to be done, nowhere near my goals. Progress is nice, but hot girls walking past me on the street don't see a dude who has made gainz, only a 245lb fatty.

[deleted] • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 04:33 PM

Hey man do it for you. Don't diminish your accomplishments, just build on them. I've been struggling with goals too...do I want to be 180 and lean or 210 and thick? I see a picture of the former, and want that...then the latter, and want that...I think it helps to identify the exact physique you want. Find someone with that physique (e.g., actor, athlete, whatever) and work towards it.

When you say lean, what are you talking? What would be your ideal weight?

johneyapocalypse • 4 points • 12 October, 2018 03:02 AM*

Kung-fu... southern, northern?

Focus on both. Cycle it. Get your macros right - use myfitnesspal it rocks - and you can build muscle while reducing fat. Or at least you can come god damn close to doing that.

I did that.

I cut out all shit carbs, IM'd 20/4 on weekdays, and worked-out fasted. I gained muscle and nuked fat doing that.

Myfitnesspal is a must.

p.s. I gained muscle while losing fat. There's a paleo-alternative by the dude from Mark's Daily Apple. It's good. He advocates up to around 100g - 150g carbs, including beans and fruit and it strikes me as more healthy and really easy to adhere to. RZD turned me onto IM and it's easy. I was more interested in cutting since I already had size. A lot of dudes, though, if they're **not** lard asses, will mostly recommend size first, then cut. I think you're low enough at 21% that as long as you have some size you should drop further and get to 15%. You'll feel great there. Between biceps and abs my wife digs the abs the most.

And make 2% Greek yogurt your new best friend.

RedPill-BlackLotus • 2 points • 12 October, 2018 12:22 PM

Start small, wax on wax off type of shit.

Don't complicate things.

Start by just writing down everything you eat for a couple of weeks. The point is, once you record everything you eat, you eventually only eat things you want to write down.

It's like building a sand castle.

Next, after you are comfortable recording your food, get a my fitness pal account and start weighing your portions. This will force you to limit your menu, that's the point.

Once you have a small list of foods you have on rotation you can weigh yourself every day and plot a line. The trajectory will tell you if you need to eat more or less.

You always lift the same. Always do cardio, even if you are trying to gain muscle, just eat some more food. If you nail the cardio habit it makes cutting painless.

The point is to establish your routine. The physique is a byproduct, it's a visual representation of your consistency.

SorcererKing • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 05:23 AM

I understand that you cannot burn fat & build muscle simultaneously over the long run.

Depends on who you ask:

/r/leangains

Sepean • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 05:57 AM

Leangains use bulk and cut cycles too for changing body composition, they just don't use it to maintain (though on maintaining they sort of run 1 day cycles, eating above TDEE on training days and below on rest days)

hack3ge • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 07:58 PM

I've been doing leangains for years so I can weigh in. They have a recomp option where you essentially eat right around maintenance but carb load on lifting days in the hopes that it makes you more anabolic.

I've tried it but it just didn't seem to work for me. That being said fat guys and people who have never lifted before can definitely cut and build muscle. There's a 9-12 month window of noob gains that you can take advantage of as a beginner in lifting.

But you are right that Martin uses bulk and cut cycles to change composition after the initial recomp. Right now I'm actually doing a lean bulk - I got down to 9% BF at 5'8" 150lbs. I was ripped but small and being short that's not a good look. This is my first bulk / cut cycle and I'm interested to see if I can actually build muscle at the 2lb per month rate and minimize fat gain even though I have been lifting for a while. So far seems promising, my lifts are all going way up so far - added 40lbs to my bench, 100lbs to my deadlift, 70lbs to my squat and I still have abs being up 18lbs - there's definitely some fat gains but I think that's inevitable.

FoxShitNasty83 • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 07:39 AM

Read burn the fat feed the muscle. Track what you eat specifically look at setting macros. Get anal about it.

hystericalbonding • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 11:23 AM

Going against the grain here.

Assuming natty.

If you're stalling and struggling, then eat at maintenance for 4-6 weeks while increasing strength. Cut again after that, using whichever diet strategy you prefer. It's a psychological break, and it may help to lessen the stress response. Losing 10% of body mass is a threshold for some people where things start to go awry in terms of testosterone, cortisol, gut symptoms, and fatigue. Drop 10%, maintain for a month or so, drop another 10%, rinse and repeat.

gameoflibidos • 1 point • 12 October, 2018 02:19 PM

So I've lived by the slow body composition change for 2.5 years now. That is, I eat just slightly more than maintenance calories and in theory I gain muscle slowly which requires more caloric maintenance which then results in some slow weight loss and a slow cycle. While that has worked to a degree, it's frustrating how long it takes. (*note I am 41, it is harder for us at this age)

Most people though will tell you to drop the weight first. In which case I highly recommend Keto. It works. It's not the easiest diet to stick to, but it works for sure. Get the weight off and then start a bulk/cut cycle. Bulk in the fall, cut in the spring.

I will tell you though, at our age even if your T levels are good (mine are actually quite high for my age), it takes a long time to build a good physique. As I said, I'm 2.5 years in and I'm only maybe half way to my goal. I have considered the roids because of this. It's so slow its frustrating at times, but am still attempting to do it cleanly.

Make sure to get your T tested though. If you have low T, you'll get nowhere and be wasting your time except

for the Keto diet part.

DeplorableRay • 1 point • 13 October, 2018 01:37 PM

You may underestimate how many autistic fucks there are on this site that will take CICO for face value and rationalize that candy dinner.

ChokingDownRP[S] • 1 point • 14 October, 2018 01:28 AM

I'm going to start the new week off with a serious effort to lose weight by doing a keto with IF diet and continued lifting & cardio. I will Dial in my macros as I go. I lost significant weight on the Atkins diet around 13 years ago...gained it back because I lost focus and determination. Just didn't have the right mindset to maintain weight loss. I do now!

[deleted] • 1 point • 15 October, 2018 02:12 AM

I find a large portion of the population could loose a noticeable amount of weight if they just cut out sugar from their diet.

Your coffee/tea should be black

Start removing any soda from your life

Even some yogurts have soda levels of sugar so start paying attention to the grams of sugar.

4 grams of sugar is 1 of those square sugar cubes.... if you start doing the math in your head and realize a soda is like 7-8 of those squares it might help you realize how toxic that shit is.