



MUSCLE GAIN DIETING **MADE SIMPLE**

Dr. Mike Israetel

With Max Weisenthal



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1.

STANDARDIZING YOUR INTAKE

So you want to diet to gain muscle. Great!

There are a lot of people who have already done this and many more who are currently trying to do the very same thing, so welcome to the club!

Now, while many well-intentioned people will put in an incredible effort toward their muscle-building dieting endeavor, a large fraction of those people will wind up doing a few too many things wrong, which, as you might imagine, typically leads to suboptimal and underwhelming results.

You, on the other hand, are going to get *spectacular* results simply because you've found one of the best resources the fitness industry can offer. Once you've absorbed all of the information in this particular guide, you will be far ahead of most people in your understanding of how to diet effectively to put on as much muscle as possible.

So, where do we start?

The first thing to think about when it comes to muscle-gain dieting is your current state of affairs in terms of your habits surrounding nutrition.

The primary variable here is simply how much food you're eating. Proper muscle gain dieting revolves heavily around consuming the right amount of food, and, because everyone is different, basic calorie intake formulas *might* not work as well as taking a more in-depth look at your own current diet and making more advanced adjustments.

So, instead of giving you a generic plan to follow that may or may not work, you'll be developing your own muscle-gain diet plan over the course of this guide so that you

can start moving down a path that leads you to great results without any unnecessary guesswork.

To understand your current state of diet affairs, tracking your food intake for about two weeks is a good idea.

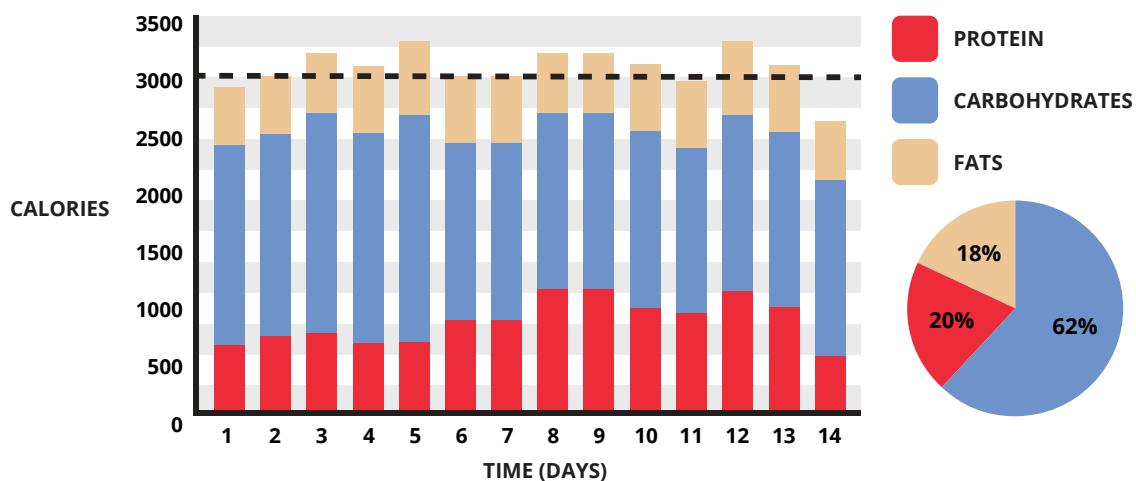
This can be done best by using the free version of an app like MyFitnessPal to count your daily macros (proteins, carbohydrates, and fats) and your caloric intake. If you're on the newer end of tracking your macros and calories and need a simpler approach, check out our Healthy Eating Made Simple guide and corresponding YouTube series before diving too far into your understanding of muscle-gain dieting. The concepts outlined in those resources will undoubtedly give you an important foundational understanding of how to eat for long-term health, which you can then build upon once you're ready to put on some hard-earned muscle.

Graph 1:

After about two weeks of tracking, you'll know your daily averages for how many proteins, carbohydrates, and fats you're taking in, and these data points will serve as the foundation for the changes we'll make that will transform your current diet into a diet designed specifically toward helping you put on muscle.

AVERAGE MACRONUTRIENT INTAKE

After about two weeks of tracking, you'll know your daily averages for how many proteins, carbohydrates, and fats you're taking in, and these data points will serve as the foundation for the changes we'll make that will transform your current diet into a diet designed specifically toward helping you put on muscle.



If you're already familiar with your average daily macronutrient intake, just skip this step and move onto section two.

2.

CHOOSING HIGH QUALITY FOODS

Standardizing and tracking your intake is a great start, but now that you know how much food you're eating, it's time to make sure you're eating the right *kinds* of food.

Because after all, if your diet is mostly Twinkies and lard, you could certainly be eating better for muscle gain!

By taking in foods from mostly the right kinds of sources, you can make sure that your macros are met in the most nutritious ways possible. This will result in greater health as you gain muscle, which is important because health is the core foundation of the hard training in the gym you'll also be doing to gain muscle.

By eating the right kinds of foods, you'll also be making sure your pumps in the gym are maximized, your energy levels are as high as they can be, and your muscle-growth training is as productive as possible.

Lastly, high-quality sources of food, especially protein, simply pack on more muscle gram for gram than lower-quality sources.

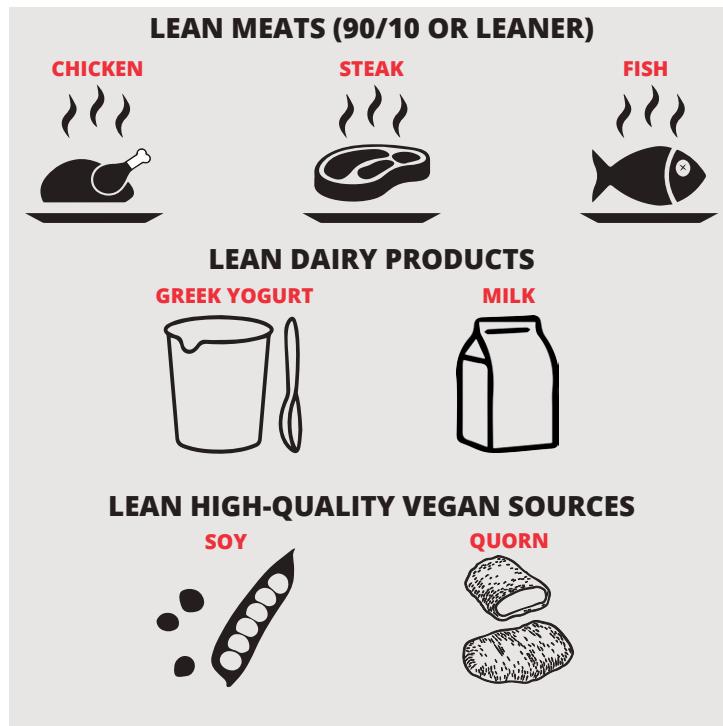
What constitutes these high-quality sources? Let's take a look.

HEALTHY MUSCLE-GAINING FOOD COMPOSITION

Protein Sources

- Lean Meats (90/10 or leaner)
- Lean Dairy Products (1% fat or leaner)
- Lean, High-Quality Vegan Sources

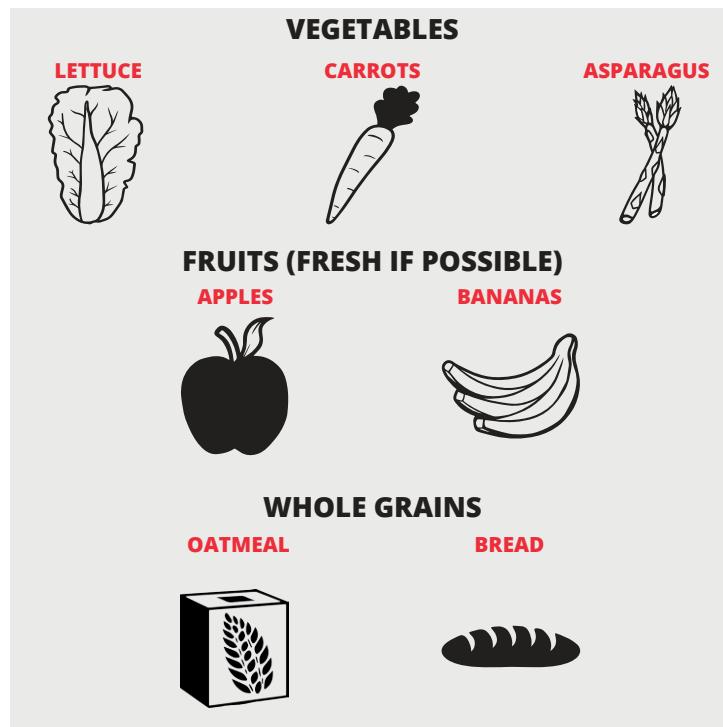
HIGH QUALITY PROTEIN SOURCES:



Carbohydrate Sources

- Vegetables
- Fruits (fresh if possible)
- Whole Grains

HIGH QUALITY CARBOHYDRATE SOURCES:



Fat Sources

- Poly-and Mono-Unsaturated-Heavy Sources
 - Olive/canola oils, nuts, nut butters, avocado
 - Fats from these major categories are an excellent way to boost your caloric intake when needed and are most likely the healthiest nutrients to eat in a caloric surplus.

HIGH QUALITY FAT SOURCES:

POLY-AND MONO-UNSATURATED HEAVY SOURCES

OLIVE OIL



CANOLA OIL



NUTS



NUT BUTTERS



AVOCADO



MRP

Now, to be clear, you don't have to consume *all* of your calories from these healthy sources, but eating a majority of them from this basic selection is probably a good idea if you want to put on the most muscle, the least fat, and stay the healthiest while doing so.

Eating between 75% or 85% of your weekly calories from such foods likely puts you into a realm in which eating "even healthier" only improves your overall outcomes marginally at best.

So, if you're serious about gaining muscle the right way, shoot to make four out of every five meals healthy, and then one out of those five can be some junk food. For bonus points, make sure the junk meals are high in protein (or consume a protein shake after) and you'll be off to a productive start.

3.

HITTING THE RIGHT MACROS

So far, you've been eating at your usual level of calorie and macronutrient intake, but you've been focused on meeting these needs with mostly healthy foods.

Now, we need to zoom in on your macronutrient amounts to make sure you're getting enough of each macronutrient to optimize muscle growth.

In muscle building nutrition, **protein** is critical because it's the building block of muscle tissue.

Carbohydrates are important because they provide the best kind of training energy, and, in concert with protein, can boost muscle growth on net balance via their effects on insulin and cortisol hormone levels.

Lastly, enough **fat** intake can make sure your general health and hormonal levels are good, which is especially important with regards to hormones like testosterone and estrogen, both of which need to be supported intentionally for maximum muscle growth.

The question is: How much of each of these macronutrients will your body need to build muscle best?

Let's dive in.

CALCULATING YOUR MACRONUTRIENT INTAKE

- Protein Intake

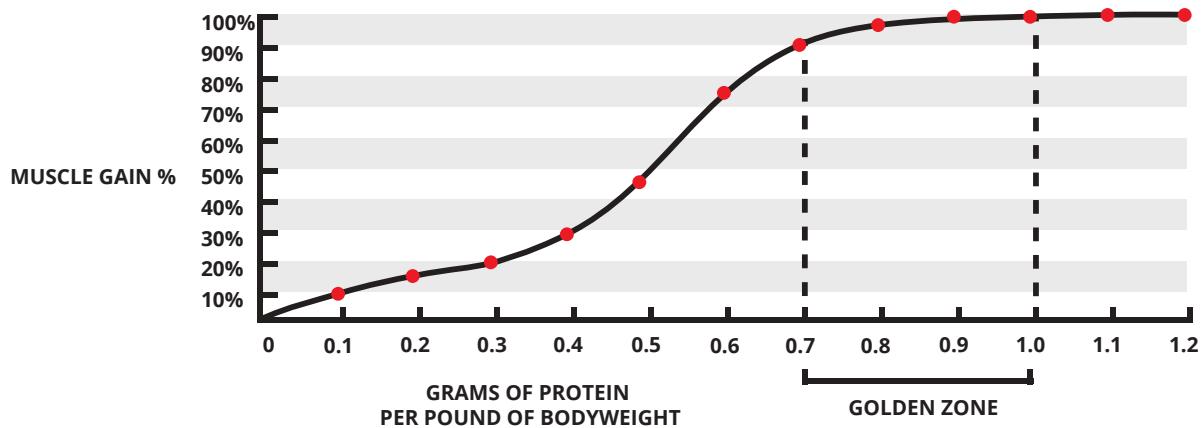
- Consuming roughly 1 g of protein per pound of body weight per day is a good idea for most people looking for best muscle-gain results. Note that eating *more* protein than this does not predictably increase your muscular gains. If it did, we'd be telling you to eat that amount instead.



For example, this means that a 150-pound person would aim to consume around 150 g of protein per day.

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- **Fat Intake**

- Anything north of 0.3 g per pound of body weight per day is enough to meet needs for proper hormonal balance and long-term health, but values above 0.4 g per pound per day tend to promote even better hormonal environments for muscle growth.
- Because of this, there's no realistic upper limit on fats for their own sake, but eating too many fats can impinge on the amount of carbohydrates you can have. In most cases, best results are likely to occur with no more than 0.6 g of fat per pound of body weight per day.



For example, a 150-pound person might consume between 60 g and 90 g of fats per day when they start their muscle-gain diet.

- **Carbohydrate Intake**

- Once you've accounted for all of the proteins and fats in your diet, you'll need to add in carbohydrates to match your target calories.
- Your calorie target will be whatever total calories you've been eating and tracking on a daily average by this point. If you just have the totals for your macros and not your total calories,, here's a simple formula to determine your calorie consumption.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{(Grams of daily protein} \times 4) + (\text{Grams of daily carbs} \times 4) + \\ & \quad (\text{Grams of daily fats} \times 9) = \text{Total Calories} \end{aligned}$$

- Once you figure out your calories from your current tracked diet using the above formula, you can plug in your new grams of proteins and fats you have derived from this section of the book.
- In order to calculate your carbohydrates once your proteins and fats have been determined, simply use the following formula:

$$\text{Carbohydrate grams} = (\text{Daily calories} - ((\text{protein grams} \times 4) + (\text{fat grams} \times 9))) / 4$$



Example: 150-pound person eating 2,000 calories per day

- Total Daily Caloric Consumption = 2,000
- Daily Protein Intake (P) = 150 g
- Daily Fat Intake (F) = 75 g
 - (Protein = 4 calories per gram, Fat = 9, Carbohydrates = 4)
- P + F Calories = 1,275 calories
- Remaining Calories = 725 calories divided by 4
- Daily Carbohydrate Intake (C) = 180 g

As long as you get your protein in and your fats stay between 0.4 and 0.6 g per pound of body weight per day, you can consume whichever ratio of carbohydrates to fats that you like.

That ratio can even be different on different days or vary in order to accommodate other meals.

For example, if you have a high-fat meal planned for a restaurant dinner later tonight, you can lower your carbohydrates a bit to compensate and vice-versa. As long as you're meeting your protein and daily calorie needs, you're doing most of the heavy lifting (pun intended) for your muscle-gain diet.

Later on in your muscle-gain diet journey, you can spend a few weeks at the lower end of fat intake (0.4 g per pound of body weight per day) and a few weeks at the higher end (0.6 g per pound of body weight per day) and see which one makes your food easier and more enjoyable to eat, your digestion more comfortable, your workouts more intense, and your recovery as effective as possible.

If you can't realistically tell a difference, just set your average daily fats at 0.5 g and go from there. There's no reason to make it any more complicated than that.

Now that your macros are squared away, it's time to look at how many meals you're eating and what they look like.

4.

CHOOSING MEAL SIZE AND TIMING

Yes, you could just eat at random times with fluctuating meal and snack numbers and still get great results.

But, by having a bit more structure to the content, size, and timing of your meals, you can benefit more in at least three different ways:



1. A regular meal schedule has been shown to be superior for both results and adherence in the scientific literature.
2. A regular meal schedule makes meal prep easier and your daily schedule easier to navigate.
 - Eventually, you're going to have to eat *a lot* of food to gain the most muscle you can, and eating that much food consistently can be difficult if you just "wing it" from meal to meal.
 - By prepping food in advance, you align yourself with the practices of almost every champion bodybuilder. This isn't to say that you should mimic the behaviors and habits of champion bodybuilders without reason, but in this case, there is a very good reason.
3. Proper meal sizing and timing make your workouts better and more effective, your daily energy higher, and your sleep better.
 - This also allows you to eat more food if needed, even if you have to work around low hunger levels to get it done.
 - For most people seeking maximum muscle size, that may eventually be a reality.

MEAL NUMBER

As peculiar as this may sound, you can eat as little as one meal per day and see results as long as you hit your daily macros.

However, eating just one meal a day while trying to gain mass will quickly become an exercise in stomach pain, so eating slightly smaller meals more frequently is probably wise.

In addition, a substantial amount of [direct research](#) shows that eating three or more meals per day is superior to eating two or fewer meals per day in terms of maximizing muscle gain and minimizing fat gain, so you will see recommendations in this guide following that line of thinking in most cases.

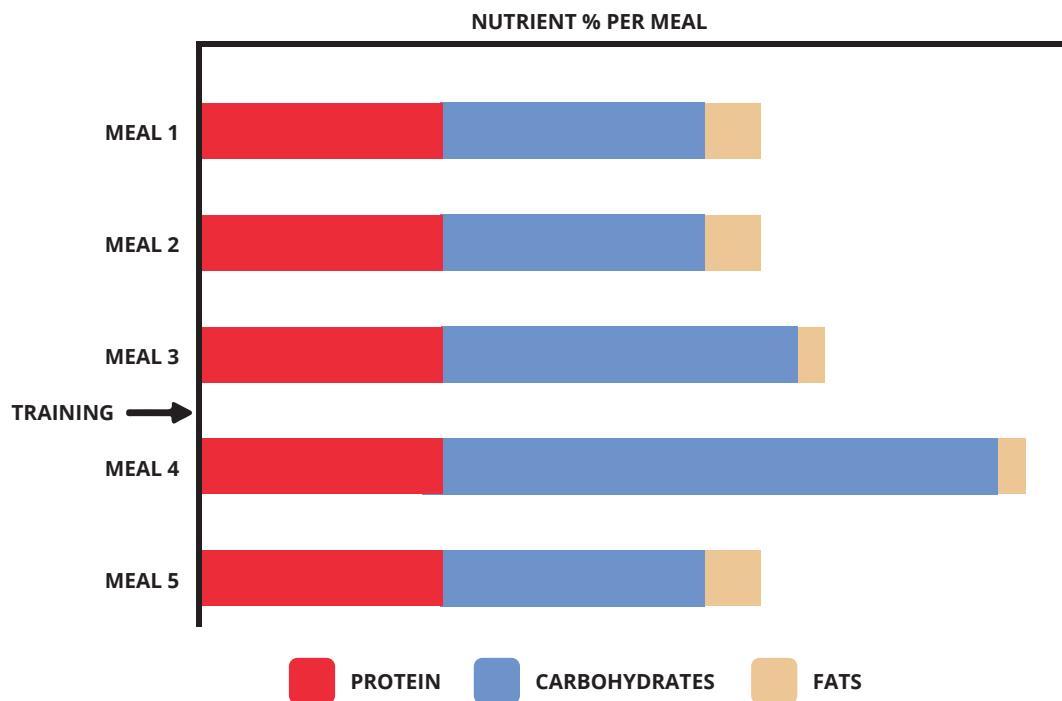
Consuming 3-5 daily meals also works better when it comes to squeezing in more daily calories when needed, providing energy at the right time for training, and avoiding the risk of training on an unnecessarily full stomach to the extent that you may get sick and have a bad workout.

How you space out your meals can also affect your results.

Ideally, you may want to spread your meals out in a way similar to the following structure:

- 1.** A meal within a few hours of waking to begin growing muscle and prevent muscle loss
- 2.** A post-workout meal to fuel muscle growth
 - And ideally, you would consume some food a few hours before your workout as well to power your hard training. This is optional, however, and training fasted is totally fine if you train within an hour or so of waking.
- 3.** A meal every six hours at least to present muscle-building nutrients to your body
- 4.** A meal within two hours of bedtime so that your body has adequate nutrition to build muscle and reduce fatigue while you sleep

WHEN TO TRAIN



Now that your meal timing has been taken care of, let's figure out how many macronutrients to eat per meal.

MACRONUTRIENT DISTRIBUTION ACROSS MEALS

It's important to understand which combinations of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats work best throughout the different meals you eat in a typical day.

Here's the breakdown.

Protein should be pretty even per meal. Thus, if you eat four meals per day and take in 200 g of protein total, you should eat about 50 g of protein per meal. Eating 40 g is fine, and 60 g is fine too, but eating random meals of 10 g or 90 g might not be ideal.

Carbohydrates should usually be higher before a workout and after a workout.

For example, if you're eating 400 g of carbohydrates over five meals, the pre-workout meal can have 100 g of carbohydrates, the workout occurs two hours after, and the post-workout meal can have 150 g of carbohydrates, and the other three meals of the day can have about 50 g of carbohydrates each.

In general, fats should stay away from workouts as much as possible.

This is especially the case before workouts as they can cause digestive discomfort and interfere with hard training.

Fats take longer to digest and slow down the digestion and release of all other macronutrients in the meal in which they are eaten. Therefore, if you eat 100 g of fats per day over three meals, you might want to have 25 g of fats in your pre-workout meal, 25 g of fats in your post-workout meal, and 50 g of fats in your third meal later in the day.

With all that in mind, let's see what a sample muscle-gaining meal plan for a 150-pound lifter might look like. Let's assume their daily macros are the following: P150, F80, C300.



- **Meal 1: 10:00 AM**

- P40, F25, C50
- Turkey bacon, eggs and egg whites, veggies, whole grain English muffin

- **Meal 2: 2:00 PM (Pre-Workout)**

- P35, F15, C70
- Turkey sandwich with vegetables, cheese, and light mayo, fruit

- **Meal 3: 7:00 PM (Post-Workout)**

- P35, F10, C140
- Meat sauce pasta with grilled vegetables on the side

- **Meal 4: 10:00 PM**

- P40, F30, C40
- Fairlife skim milk with whole grain toast and crunchy peanut butter

5.

SUPPLEMENTS AND HYDRATION

Before we start tweaking your calories and macronutrient intake to support your specific goals, let's chat about supplements and hydration. While there are many different types of supplements that claim to build muscle, only a few of the legal ones actually help in any meaningful way.

Let's take a quick look at them.

SUPPLEMENTS



Whey Protein

- Whey protein can be used intra-workout and post-workout with carbohydrates for advanced lifters.
- Whey protein is a very high quality protein source and likely has a small but meaningful impact on muscle growth.
- Regular food works just fine if you don't want to mess with any powders or shakes.



Carbohydrate Powders

- Carbohydrate powders include products like Gatorade, Powerade, Vitargo, etc.
- These powders can be mixed with whey protein for intra-workout and post-workout anabolism and energy input.
- These powders can also be easy on your GI tract when whole foods become difficult to consume. Such carbohydrate sources can be lifesavers when you're eating much more food than you're comfortable with and could benefit from a break from all of the chewing and energy-intensive digesting for a bit. When combined with whey protein, these powders are ideal sources of carbohydrates for a post-workout shake if you choose to have one. For those who simply don't seem to get hungry for a while after hard training, using these powders in the post-workout window can be a very effective strategy.
- What about mass gainers? Mass gainers are usually pre-formulated combinations of whey or other proteins and easily digested carbohydrates. You can take them if you like, but remember that they are just powdered food. There is nothing magical about them.



Creatine

- Creatine can work extremely well when it comes to adding strength and muscle size. It can also give you a crazy pump!
- If you choose to take it, buy only the monohydrate variety. For most people, about 5 g of daily creatine taken at any time of the day (doesn't have to be around the workout) will be effective during their muscle-gain phase.
- Note too that creatine will temporarily increase your body weight via added body water, so don't be tempted to think you just gained five pounds of muscle in a week! After a week of taking it, your weight should stabilize and you'll have no problem tracking tissue changes (fat, muscle) from then on.



Stimulants

- Caffeine is the most common of these, the best-studied, and probably one of the safest.
- Stimulants can help you power through your hardest muscle-gain workouts, especially later on in your training phases when fatigue is high.
- Use as little as you need to power your workouts. Taking a pre-workout product is fine if you enjoy it, but keep in mind that coffees, sodas, or even Monsters can work just fine too.
- If you are sensitive to caffeine, we recommend starting with a third or less of a recommended pre-workout formula dose as many pre-workouts can be very potent.
- Watch your intake for sleep purposes and don't consume high amounts of stimulants after midday if sleep is an issue. Lastly, for most people, stimulants have an appetite-suppressive effect, so if you're having trouble eating food, especially after your workout, consider easing up your Imk stimulant intake. Remember, food builds more muscle than stimulants ever will!

HYDRATION

Let's keep this super simple.

First, if you're drinking at least 8-12 oz of fluids with each meal and can consistently report off-yellow or clear urine, you're good to go.

Second, you might consider topping off your water about an hour before a hard workout with another 8-16 oz of calorie-free fluids, especially if you tend to sweat a lot during your workouts.

During workouts, drink a little more fluid than you'd prefer since thirst can lag a bit behind dehydration during hard workouts. If you're thirstier, drink more. If you feel like

you're drowning in fluids, drink less, and for almost everyone involved in muscle gain, that's about all you need to know.

In summary, there really aren't any magical muscle-gain supplements, and hydration is not something to be worried about in most cases.

In terms of practical applications on the supplement side of things, feel free to consider taking a daily multivitamin to round out your nutritional intake. As it pertains to hydration, experiment with more or less fluids to see where the line between good urine volume and color and the discomfort of having to pee every hour falls for you.

6.

CREATING A SURPLUS

If you've read this far, you know how to organize the very core of your muscle-building nutrition plan.

Actually implementing it may take you a few hours (if you've done this before) to as many as several weeks or even *months* if you're new to this and easing into the process.

Getting used to this way of eating, however, is critical to long-lasting success, so take all the time you need. Remember, you don't get any bonus points for rushing the process to the detriment of your long-term results.

Once you're ready and comfortable with the basic plan, it's time to switch gears and create the most powerful change: the intentional caloric surplus.

As long as you're eating well and training hard, eating a bit more calories on the average day than your body burns is a *huge* factor in adding muscle mass.

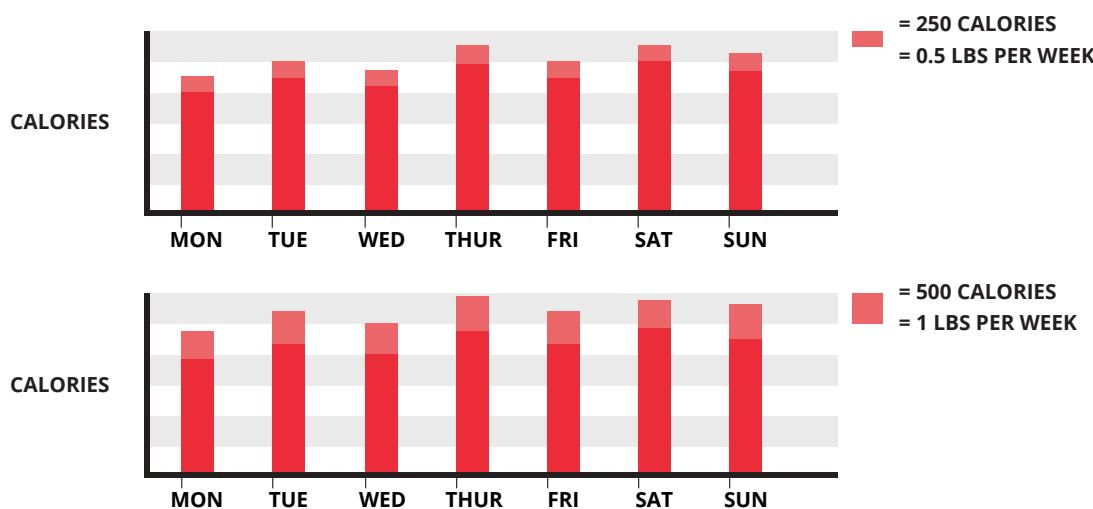
If you add too *few* calories to your plan, you'll experience needlessly slow gains or accidentally wind up eating *less* than the surplus you need due to measurement error.

If you add too *many* calories to your plan, you'll likely gain a lot more body fat than you need to in order to gain the muscle you want.

From a combination of research and anecdotal experience, we've found that aiming to gain about 0.25-0.5% of your bodyweight per week over about 8-16 weeks when seeking to put on maximum muscle is probably a good approach for most.

To that end, adding about 250 daily calories to your already-created-via-the-recommendations-in-this-guide-so-far plan will result in a likely gain of about half a pound of body weight per week. Similarly, a surplus of about 500 daily calories will result in a likely gain of about one pound of body weight per week.

CREATING A SURPLUS



As an example, let's do some super easy math in order to determine how big of a calorie surplus you will need in order to gain weight at your desired rate.

For this calculation, you'll need:

- 1.** Your current body weight
- 2.** Your weight gain goal (per week) as a percentage
- 3.** To multiply your figure from #1 by your figure from #2
- 4.** To multiply the product from #3 by 500 calories



Here's an example:

1. Your current bodyweight
 - 150 pounds
2. Your weight gain goal (per week) as a percentage
 - 0.5% per week
3. $150 \text{ pounds} \times 0.005 = 0.75 \text{ pounds per week}$
4. 0.75 pounds per week will occur ($0.75 \times 500 \text{ calories}$) via ≈ 375 daily calorie surplus

And there you have it! In this case, an average of 375 extra daily calories, or whatever number you determined by plugging in your own body weight and weight gain goals, is what you would need to consume in order to achieve the aforementioned rate of gain.

At this point, we need to determine which combination of proteins, carbohydrates, and fats you should be eating extra on top of your regular intake to fill out that surplus.

Broadly speaking, any combination is totally fine, but, for those who are interested in implementing a bit more specificity to their surplus design, you could do the following:



- 1. Try to add as many calories as you can from carbohydrates.**
 - Carbohydrates can potentiate pumps, boost energy, facilitate anabolism, and are also very easy to eat, which make them great surplus-boosters.
- 2. Make up as much of the rest of your surplus as you can via healthy fats.**
 - This is good practice until fats get much over 0.6 g per pound of body weight.
- 3. Lastly, if you *really* can't consistently (across a weekly average) eat that many calories from healthy food sources, consider the following:**
 - Throw in a bit of junk to fill in the gaps, but make sure each junk meal has a decent amount of protein in it. For example, if on Saturday you have a pint of ice cream to push in some tasty extra calories, consider having a whey protein shake with it or right after it to make sure your muscle gains stay on track.

It's that easy!

Well, until and unless it *isn't* that easy, which is why we've dedicated the next chapter of this guide to dealing with common muscle-gain dieting difficulties.

7.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULTIES

By now, you're well on your way to having this whole "muscle-gaining nutrition thing" figured out.

And on paper, you've probably noticed that it doesn't seem that hard. But, once you try to put the process meaningfully into action, things can sometimes get a bit more difficult.

Specifically, there are a few difficulties in muscle-gain dieting that are common enough for us to mention in this guide. They are macro-fitting, weight stalling, fullness, and excessive body fat gain.

MACRO-FITTING

Macro-fitting is the process of choosing foods to meet your daily macro needs. Dieting for muscle-gain can be tough because you'll be eating a lot, and trying to figure out what to eat all the time can get tiresome! This is especially true if you're making your food decisions on the fly and even more so if you're not a self-proclaimed "big eater" to begin with and don't really have any go-to favorite meals.

One of the best solutions to this problem is to create a list for yourself of about 2-4 basic protein sources, vegetables, healthy carbohydrate sources in the fruits and grains categories, and healthy fat choices.

Combine them to create palatable meals that you cook in bulk, pre-package, and drop into the fridge or freezer. Then, when you need them, they'll be just a microwave button's click away!

If your time is very expensive, you can consider a food-prep service like [Trifecta](#), and then the basics are already taken care of for you.

It's also a wise idea to consider some "on the go" meal options that fit your macros such as protein bars, protein shakes, wraps, and burritos. Chipotle or Qdoba are great options in many cases! And although you won't always be able to get exactly what you need, remember that fortune favors the prepared. If you consistently find yourself getting frustrated by your inability to find macro-friendly meals in a pinch, you may have to become more regimented in the meals you prepare ahead of time and carry with you while traveling.

WEIGHT STALLING

Weight stalling occurs when you've either miscalculated how much you're really eating or moving, or because your physical activity and metabolic rate have adapted to the higher calories.

In such cases, your weight gain slows and then stalls, which is a bad deal because gaining weight is kind of the core foundation of building muscle. If you go more than 1-2 weeks without gaining any weight, consider adding another 250 calories to your average daily diet. Then, see how that plays out for another 1-2 weeks and repeat as needed to stay on track in terms of gaining the average amount of weight per week that you planned on in the beginning.

This process *must* work in almost all cases, but pulling it off can lead you into another common muscle-gain diet challenge: fullness.

FULLNESS

As you gain more and more weight, you will get less and less hungry because, in most cases, your body values homeostasis and will prefer to stay about the same size.

At this point, the more you try to eat, the more intense the fullness becomes. As your fullness intensifies even further, this can lead to becoming completely repulsed by eating so much as another tablespoon of peanut butter.

Many people will begin to under-eat in this case and will fail to gain the needed weight and muscle they were originally hoping for. But, because it's an age-old and well-known problem, it also has a few common solutions that you can be ready to deploy.

Here are a few of the most helpful ones:

1. Eat more calorically dense foods as you feel less hungry.

- This can be as simple as eating slightly fattier meats, mixing more oils into your carbohydrate sources, consuming white rice and white pasta instead of brown rice and wheat pastas, choosing less filling vegetables, choosing more grains versus fruits, etc.

CALORIE CONTENT PER 100 GRAMS

PROTEIN:	CARBOHYDRATES:	FATS:
80/20 Beef: 254 kcal	Flax: 534 kcal	Olive Oil: 884 kcal
Chicken Thigh: 197 kcal	Quinoa: 360 kcal	Pecan: 691 kcal
Chicken Breast: 173 kcal	Rice: 357 kcal	Peanut Butter: 598 kcal
97/3 Beef: 153 kcal	Banana: 89 kcal	Cashew: 553 kcal
Turkey Bacon: 116 kcal	Potato: 77 kcal	Cheddar Cheese: 403 kcal
Whole Milk Greek Yogurt: 85kcal	Melon: 36 kcal	Avocado: 167 kcal
Nonfat Greek Yogurt: 59kcal	Pumpkin: 26 kcal	
	Watercress: 11kcal	

2. Eat more tasty foods as you feel less hungry.

- Often, super-tasty foods are easier to eat in higher amounts, which is a good thing when you're trying to combat fullness.
- Consider using flavors, salt, and spices to make your go-to muscle-gaining meals like rice and ground turkey taste a bit better.

3. Eat *something* when you're not hungry but have a meal planned.

- Skipping meals is a death knell when your goal is to gain weight.
- Liquid meals (like mass gainer shakes) are way better than not eating anything at all.
 - You can use them specifically during times when you know your hunger is bound to be low (such as in the morning for many people).

EXCESSIVE BODY FAT GAIN

The final difficulty we want to address in this guide is excessive body fat gain.

In almost every case, *some* fat gain will come along with muscle gain, and the good news is that fat is pretty easy to lose after the muscle gain phase is over.

Thus, it's probably best to think of fat gain as just a temporary and reversible cost of the muscle-gain process. But if you'd like to stay on the leaner side of things, consider some of the following tips:



- Aim for the lower end of the weekly weight gain pace.
 - For example, aim to gain 0.25% of your body weight each week instead of 0.5%.
- Aim for the lower end of the gain duration.
 - For example, aim to gain for 8-12 weeks instead of 14-16 weeks.



- Eat mostly healthy foods and don't cheat too much. It's tough to complain about excess fat gain when a third of your meals are junk food-based!
- Train hard and with higher volumes relative to your abilities.
- Stay physically active outside of the gym. This can be done very easily by getting a step tracker wristwatch and holding yourself accountable to somewhere between 8,000-10,000 steps per day to start.
- Remind yourself that fat gain is *temporary* and that it's relatively easy to lose the fat later. Think of it as just the cost of doing business. Sometimes you have to lose money to make money, which in this case would translate to gaining a bit of unwanted fat in order to get more jacked in the long-run.

When applied properly, the tips here really can help you succeed with your muscle-gain phase.

As you may have noticed, lots of people have gained some muscle temporarily, but far fewer keep that muscle on and then gain *even more* muscle on top of their initial muscle-gain sprint.

In the next section, we'll detail how you can solidify your gains and prepare your body for even more gains down the road.

8.

MAINTENANCE PHASES AND MINICUTS

When you're done with your muscle-gain phase that lasts between eight and 16 weeks, you're inevitably going to be bigger and much more muscular, which is great!

But, your body's settling point systems are going to try to pull it back down to your previous weight and muscle size, which is decidedly not great and arguably even wildly depressing.

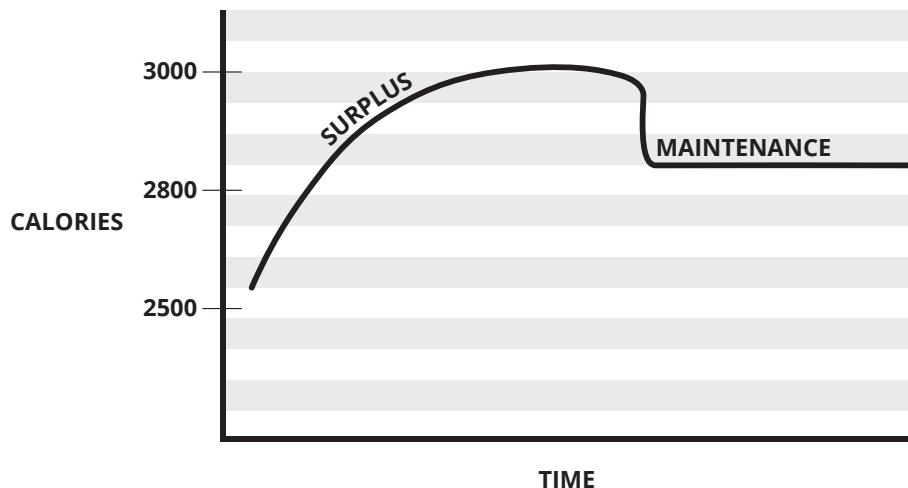
Most people will succumb to at least some of this pull and lose a lot of muscle on the way down, but you won't be making that mistake. Why? Because you're going to read this section thoroughly to the extent that you understand how to prevent it.

The key insight with regards to the prevention of muscle loss after a muscle-gain diet phase ends is that you're not *actually* done purposefully dieting yet. And this is where many people fall astray.

In other words, stick to your diet foods, don't go off-plan, and don't lose your diet momentum. Your hunger will be ultra-low, so you'll be tempted to get lazy with your eating, but stay strong!

The good news is that you should cut about 50% of your surplus calories right away. For example, if you added a total of 600 calories above your baseline intake through all of the weeks of dieting, and went from 2,500 calories to 3,100 calories, you can drop 300 calories off right away and maintain an intake of 2,800 calories.

FINDING NEW MAINTENANCE



The calories you finish your muscle gain diet on will usually be higher than those you'll maintain that new size on, so be prepared to downward-adjust your peak calories at the end of muscle gain once you enter maintenance.



You're bigger now, your metabolism is faster, and you simply need more food to maintain your new size, so no, you won't have to eat your surplus diet forever to maintain, but you'll have to eat more than you're used to.

In the first week of transitioning from your muscle-gain diet to your maintenance diet, you can expect to lose up to 2% of your weight from a reduction in body water alone. Don't let this freak you out, as it's not muscle mass and it doesn't mean you're undereating.

But, if you continue dropping weight over the second week, add in 250 calories and continue to add 250 calories weekly if your weight trends down. You will rarely have to do this more than once, but if it does happen, you can be prepared.

Lastly, on a training note, you should reduce your training volume after you're done with your muscle-gain phase. Your training volume should be at about a third of your muscle-gain training volume for the next 2-4 weeks to give your body a break and let it resensitize to new muscle gains.

You can also employ a two-week active rest phase which just involves being active in leisure activity and perhaps not even going to the gym. During such a phase, you can temporarily lose another 2% of your body mass from body water reductions, but it's important not to make any changes to your caloric intake as all of that body weight will come right back as soon as you start training again.



Once your muscle-gain *and* maintenance phases have come to an end, a few things should be happening:

1. You should be holding on to your newly gained muscle.
2. You should be healed up and ready to train.
3. You might be holding onto a bit of extra body fat.

So what happens now?

Getting rid of that extra fat will be more aesthetically pleasing and physically healthier for you before you start another phase of muscle-gain dieting.

The phase you'll do here is called a **minicut**, which is a short fat loss phase of usually 4-6 weeks in duration. During this phase, you'll aim to alter your calories to lose between 0.5% to 1.25% of your body weight per week. The shorter the phase is, the more rapid the loss rate should be.

During this phase, you should train at about two thirds of your usual training volume, which is just enough to keep the muscle you built in the last muscle gain phase but probably not enough to gain any more.

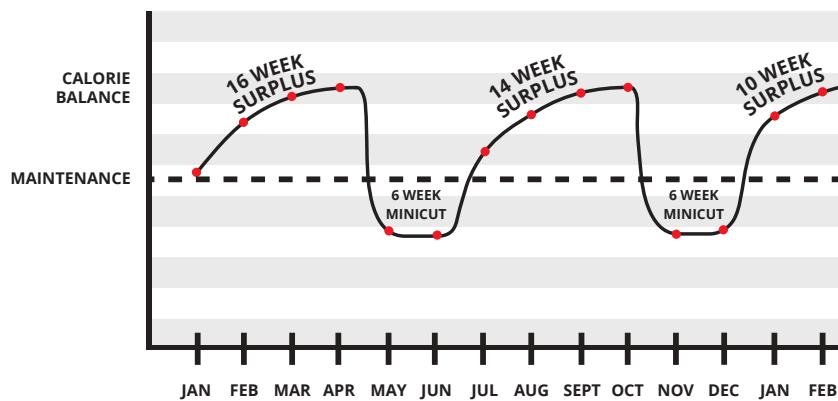
This low volume is essential to keep you sensitive to volume and thus to muscle growth so that once the minicut is over, you can begin to work up to your normal volumes in a new muscle-gain phase.

At this point, you simply repeat the entire process over again.

LONG-TERM MUSCLE-GAIN

By sequencing multiple phases of muscle-gain, maintenance/active rest, and minicutting, you can gain *lots* of muscle over the long-term.

CALORIE BALANCE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



By alternating periods of caloric surplus with periods of deficit, you can slowly add net muscle without adding fat over the course of a year of dedicated training and dieting.

But, to make sure you're getting the most out of your efforts, you want to make sure you're not trying to rush the process by attempting to gain more than about 0.5% of your body weight per week during muscle-gain phases.

It's tempting, but gaining faster than you should will probably just make you significantly fatter for an unimpressive amount of extra muscle-gain.

Additionally, you don't want to gain for much more than 16 weeks at a time as your body will tend to become very fatigued from that much unabated hard training, and your gains will slow to an underproductive grind as your injury rates may escalate and your motivation declines.

And, as tempting as it may be to want to ignore them, you're going to want to commit to maintenance/active rest and minicut phases because skipping them will reduce your anabolic sensitivity to training, increase your injury risk, and allow your body fat to increase more than you might like.

Now, that's obviously all of the stuff you *shouldn't* be doing.

Here are some helpful tips for what you *should* be doing instead to make your long-term muscle-gain journey as productive as possible:

1. Perform each of the gain-maintain-minicut phases.

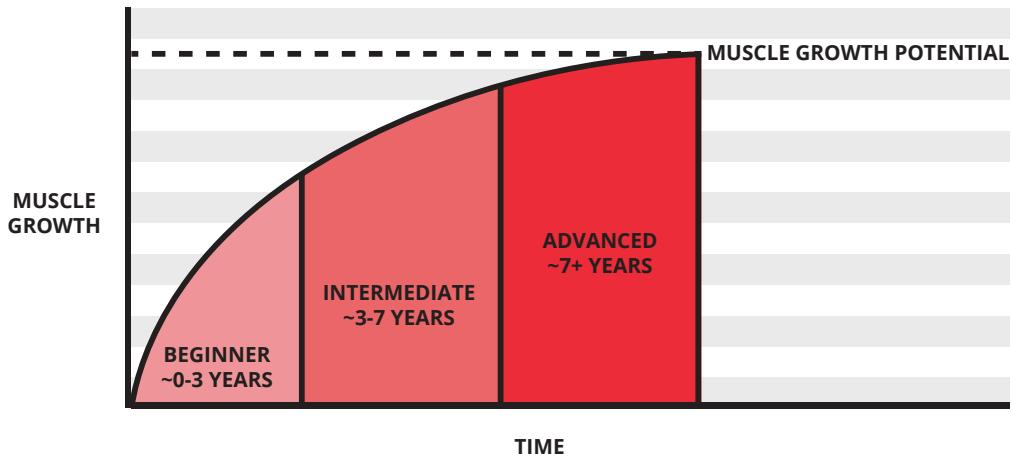
- Sometimes a longer cut will be required to re-norm leanness if you're a bit fatter than you like, so prepare to diet at 0.5-1.0% rate for 8-10 weeks if needed or desired.
- Sometimes longer maintenance phases or active rest phases are needed when you're feeling extra fatigued or if life circumstances take you away from being able to commit to a muscle-gain or fat loss phase for a while.

2. Continue to experiment with exercises and routines that work best.

- Consider priority phases for muscle groups like training your chest and triceps more than usual and your back and biceps less than usual for a muscle-gain phase. Then, you can switch them around next time and repeat the process. Such priority phases can reinvigorate stale progress.
- For more tips on effective muscle gain training, give our Hypertrophy Made Simple book and [YouTube video series](#) a look.

3. Expect for your rate of gain to slow down over time.

MUSCLE GROWTH POTENTIAL



- With every year of training, muscle-gain phases will net a bit less new muscle and a bit more body fat to burn off during minicutting. That's just how the human body works. But, if you stick with it for years, the changes you can see in your physique can be nothing short of astounding.
- The people *not* discouraged by the disappearance of "noob gain" rates are the ones that make the most impressive long-term muscle gains. Everyone you've ever seen who's very muscular is a person who almost certainly kept going even after the early and easy gains slowed down, so give that some thought if that's where you'd like your journey to go.

In short, be patient, be realistic, and remember that the biggest factor when it comes to successful long-term muscle-gain is *time*.

The other one is, of course, consistency and hard training, which you'll need in mass quantities if you want to get as big as possible.

And, if you *are* one of the few who does want to get as big as possible, the next section is for you.

10.

GETTING EXOTICALLY HUGE

Getting “exotically huge” is a fancy way of saying you’d like to get to within 95% of your maximum genetic potential to put on muscle under nearly ideal circumstances.

If that’s something that interests you, here are some insights on it:

1. It's not for everyone.

- Truthfully, there's really no good reason to get exotically huge beyond the artistic value of it. In other words, getting huge isn't guaranteed to fix *anything* in your life, win you more attention from the opposite sex, or make you happier. And it certainly won't make all of your dreams come true. In fact, it's only guaranteed to, well, get you huge! If you *love* the idea of getting huge for its own sake, it can be an amazing experience, but if you think it will automatically lead to other benefits and advantages in life, don't be so sure.
- Getting enormous also comes with a host of negative health consequences simply due to the fact that gaining *lots* of weight is usually not healthy even if most of it is muscle. Thus, to really want to get as big as possible without using drugs, you'll have to come to peace with the fact that you'll be trading away a bit of your long-term health for muscle size. And if you do choose to use drugs, it's a massive tradeoff you must be aware of.

2. It takes years to get super jacked.

- It takes about 10 years for most people to get even remotely close to their true potential, so if it's something you think you can do in 2-3 years, think again. And, keep in mind that we're talking about 10 *consistent* years of

integrated diet and training that can often be uncomfortable to the extent that you experience several (if not all) of the symptoms we outlined in section seven. So, if you're admittedly not in love with the process of bodybuilding, you might sincerely consider spending your time doing a host of other wonderful hobbies available.

- Pretty much all other very physical activities interfere with optimal muscle gain, so if you're *really* into mountain biking or surfing or racquetball or anything like that, prepare to put those hobbies on hold or on a significantly reduced frequency and intensity for a long time. For some, "giving up everything" to be as muscular as possible simply won't be worth it, which is why we're always quick to mention the interference effect.
- If size is the ultimate goal, you should be aiming to move your body weight up slowly over time. This gets *really* hard as you continue to get bigger and bigger, so you'll have to fight your body's instincts to stay smaller and really become, as the trite saying goes, comfortable with being uncomfortable in the categories of both eating and training like a monster for years.

3. The final few years of gains will require nearly ideal circumstances.

- This includes getting plenty of sleep at all times. Going through phases of not sleeping well or not being able to prioritize your sleep will almost certainly prevent you from getting exotically huge.
- You will have to set up your life in a way that eliminates most if not all of your normal life stressors. The most obvious of these might be a physically demanding job like working in construction or even an incredibly stressful job in general like managing high-risk investment profiles or being an executive in a fast-paced, hectic work culture.
- Lastly, you can't be skipping meals and workouts. Consistent, smart training and eating can be a fun job at this point, but make no mistake! It's still a job, and that job needs to be taken seriously.

4. Finally, keep in mind that the biggest guys in the world...

- Are on *lots* of drugs, and none of those are magical. Their lifestyles consist of more of the same consistent training and eating with the addition of the muscle-gain benefits of drugs. Note too that these drugs cause tons of side effects that will hamper your longevity, health, sexual function, and even your psychological wellbeing to varying (but sometimes extreme) extents.

- If you want to be the biggest you can be, it's probably the wisest thing to do to get as muscular as possible without them, *only* committing to that switch under the following circumstances:
 - If they are legal in your country
 - If you're not using them to cheat in competitive sports
 - If you have a supervising coach and medical doctor
 - Only after age 25 at the earliest
 - Only after *at least* 8-10 years of training without any drugs

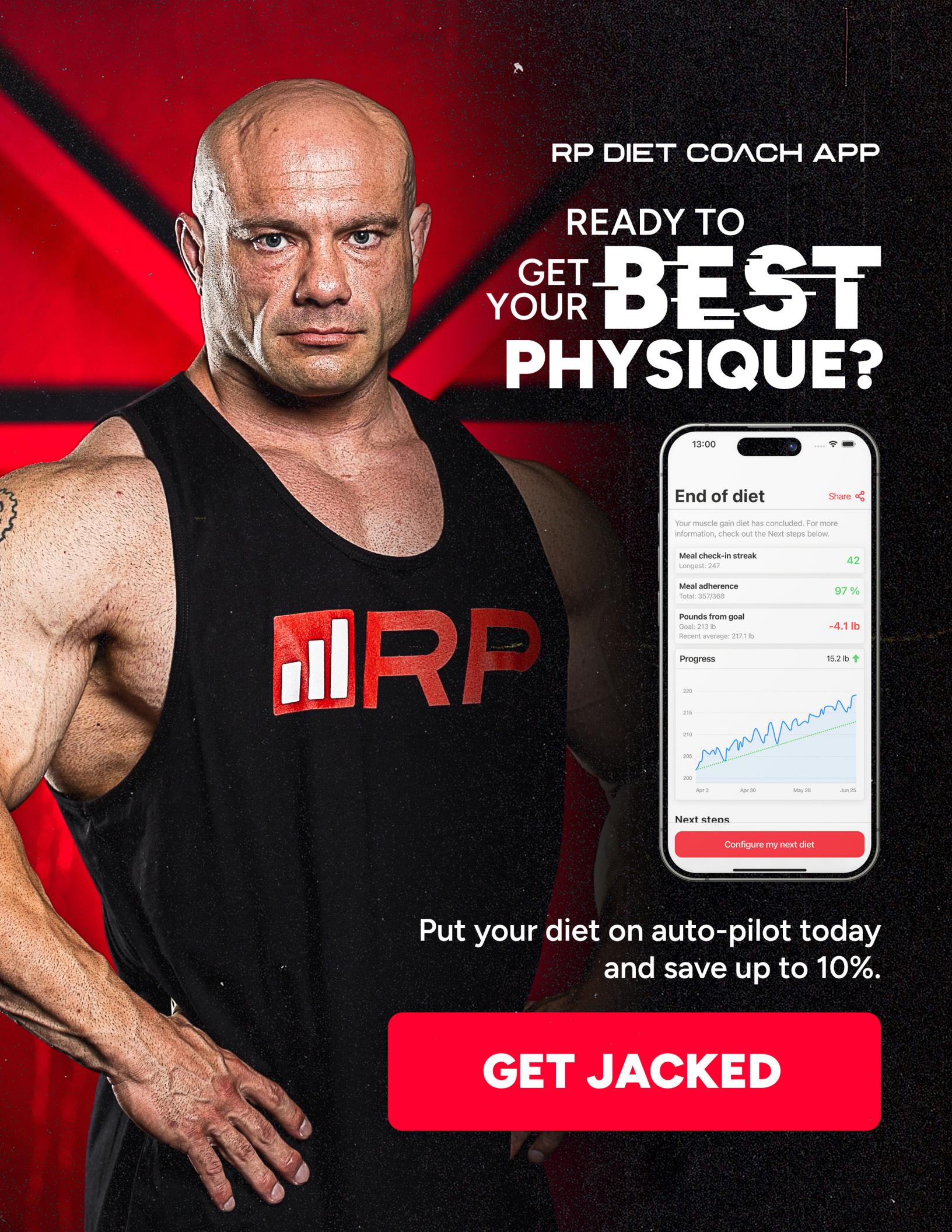
No matter which way you decide to go, make sure you're always thinking things through, and remember to be diligent, consistent, patient, and to *enjoy* yourself regardless of how big your muscles are.

And if you'd like to consume this guide in video form, you can do that via our Muscle Gain Dieting Made Simple series on YouTube.

[Muscle Gain Dieting Made Simple YouTube Series](#)

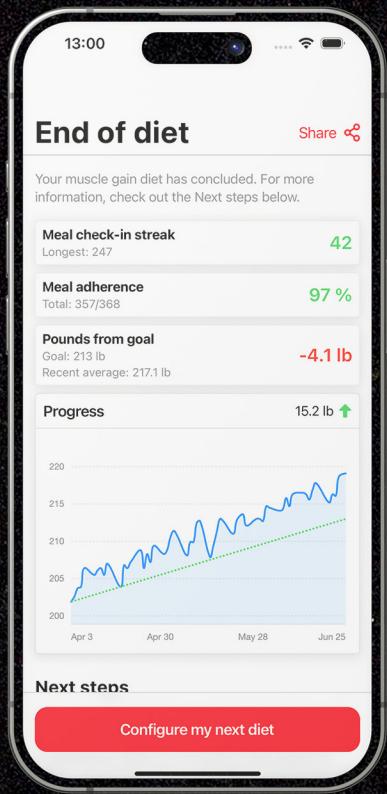
Wherever your fitness journey takes you, we wish you the very best, and we hope to have more and more resources with which to help you at every step along the way.

See you next time!



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