

The Nutritional Hierarchy For Fat Loss (inspired by Eric Helms, PhD)

Sometimes I wish I just sold detoxes and "30 Day Fixes".

I mean, life sure would be easier.

Everyone wants the quick, easy fix - and when you're selling the quick, easy fix.....well.....people tend to buy it.

In droves.

But you know what, if I did that, I wouldn't be able to sleep at night.

There's so much bullshit and quackery out there in the world of fitness.

BUT, what does the evidence REALLY say in regards to fat loss?

What is the Hierarchy of importance when it comes to changing your physique

Because there's a lot of stuff that truly doesn't matter.

Everything has its place, yes, but we are going to be talking - starting today - on the order of IMPORTANCE for fat loss.

And when we discuss the order of importance, you need to knock out these things.....*in order!*

Worrying about something that is "higher" on this snazzy little graphic won't help.....until the base is established.

And what is the most important part of fat loss?

Step 1 ==>>>> CALORIES



Nothing else matters unless calories are controlled.

It doesn't matter how "healthy" you eat.

It doesn't matter your specific food choices.

It doesn't matter when you eat.

It doesn't matter your macro breakdown.

It doesn't matter if you fast, or you do Keto, or you are eating "Paleo".

None of that matters.....unless your calories are controlled.

Now, how many calories (approximately) should you be eating for fat loss?

A few, simple guidelines:

=====> Take your bodyweight.

=====> Multiply it by 8-10

- Multiply it by 10 if you have less than 20 pounds to lose.

- Multiply it by 9 if you have 20-40 pounds to lose.

- Multiply it by 8 if you have over 40 pounds to lose.

Using me as an example, I weigh 240 pounds.

And I have 15ish extra pounds of fluff, if I wanted to lose fat.

$240 \times 10 = 2,400$ calories

That's the amount of calories I should be consuming each day (approximately) - on average - if I want to lose fat.

Do you have your calories figured out?

Yes?

Good.

It's time to discuss the next step.....

Step 2 =====> MACRONUTRIENTS



Macros, macros, macros, macros, macros.

Errrrrrybody be talkin' 'bout macros.

Now, macros ARE important.

But we need to **REALLY** understand this.....so I'm going to hammer it home here.

For pure fat loss, calories are more important.

Many times more important, in fact.

Actually calories are likely 70% of the equation - or more.

You can eat nothing but Skittles. And if you did, and you controlled your calories, you would lose weight.

Granted, you would feel like shit and be taking dumps that looked like rainbows, but you would still lose fat.

(Is that too much?)

So, hear this, if you set up your macronutrients (more on that in a second), and you AREN'T losing fat.....

It's not the macros. Probably. (I'll tell you about that probably in a minute, too.....)

AFTER you have your calories set up, the next most important step is.....your macronutrient breakdown.

Macronutrients are the part of food which contains calories.

Food consists of two different components. (This is drastically simplified, I know.....)

==> Micronutrients

Micronutrients are your vitamins, minerals, and elements which allow your bodily functions and systems to work more efficiently.

But micronutrients do not contain energy. Consuming them will not add fat to your body, nor take it away.

==> Macronutrients

Macronutrients DO provide you with energy, and consuming them will either add to - or take away from - your waistline.

There are 3 main macronutrients.....

==> Protein (4 calories per gram)

Protein is FAR AND AWAY the most important macronutrient, for a few important reasons:

1. It spares muscle when in a calorie deficit.

When you're dieting, your body can take mass from a few different places. (I'm talking MASS here, not water weight, fecal matter, etc.)

Your fat stores or your muscle.

Now, if your deficit is too big, or you don't get enough protein in your diet, your body may take the extra energy it isn't getting from food.....from the muscle on your body.

In short, instead of losing fat, you will lose muscle.

This is why those who go on crazy, restrictive diets (or those who just do cardio) don't *really* improve their physique over time.

They just look like a smaller version of themselves.

We want to retain as much muscle as possible, so keep your protein high in a diet.

2. It's the most filling macronutrient.

400 calories' worth of lean meat is roughly 1 full pound of meat.

400 calories' worth of cereal is a depressingly small amount of Frosted Flakes that will leave you crying in your bowl.

Fill up your belly with protein, and you will be fuller and more satisfied while you diet.

3. It has a substantial "TEF".

"TEF" means "thermal effect of food".

All food requires a certain amount of energy in order to be processed by the digestive system.

And protein burns about 25% of its OWN calories by the body in order to be digested.

Basically, eat more protein, and have a higher calorie deficit - without doing anything else.

All in all, this makes protein the KING of the macroz.

How much protein do you need?

A simple guide: Take your "damn, I look amazing" weight.

And eat that many GRAMS of protein each day.

The other macronutrients.....

==> Carbohydrates (4 calories per gram)

Now, let me tell you this.....there is **NOTHING** wrong with carbohydrates.

Nothing.

Eating them won't cause you to gain fat due to some mysterious insulin fairies that will visit you at night.

You can eat them in the morning.

Or at night.

Before working out.

Or after.

Before bed.

Or at lunchtime.

.....As long as your calories are CONTROLLED!

The biggest issue with carbs is the fact that they tend to be in some of the most palatable foods on earth.

Doritos.

Cheddar and Sour Cream Ruffles

Sour Patch Kids

Lucky Charms

You know.....all the good stuff. 😊:)

Just be careful and choose wisely.

==> Fat (9 calories per gram)

Everyone loves fat right now.

Fat is our best friend.

We eat almonds, avocados, olive oil, coconut oil, butter, and red meat like it's going out of style.

Since "carbs are bad" and "fat is good", we have completely disregarded the fact that FAT has over TWICE as many calories per gram.

Plus, it doesn't fill you up as well.

That creates a nasty, 1-2 combo punch that will leave you reeling like Glass Joe trying to fight Little Mac.

Whenever I get someone who "eats healthy" but can't lose fat, and we start tracking.....***they're shocked at how much fat they were eating***, and didn't even realize it.

Now, this is the fun part - we discussed protein.

How much fat and/or carbs should you consume?

Frankly.....it's your call.....just don't be stupid.

Now, what is "stupid"?

Stupid is eating zero fat.

Or zero carbs.

Take your remaining calories after the protein is accounted for, and split the rest between carbs and fats.

I wouldn't recommend going under 30 grams of fat or about 50-100 grams of carbs - for anyone.

And last but not least.....if you have your macros set up.....and you're not losing fat.....guess where the problem lies?

99% of the time the issue isn't the macros.....

It's the CALORIES!

Calories make up about 70% of the puzzle, and macros make up about 15% of the puzzle.

As you can see, it's 4-5 times more likely the issue is the overall calories, and NOT the macros.

But it IS possible. It's rare, but possible.

I had this ONE client.....who was incredibly diligent about tracking her macros.

And she was stalled out.

And we kept the calories 100% constant, and gave her more carbs and less fat. (She already had a really low intake, as she was a petite female.....)

And her fat loss rate skyrocketed as a result.

But seriously, I've only seen it once, and I've worked with thousands of people.

That's not to say it's not IMPOSSIBLE.....it's simply much less likely.

Got your calories and your macros taken care of?

Awesome, let's move on.....

Step 3 ==> MICRONUTRIENTS, FIBER, AND HYDRATION

You know, the Third most important part of your Nutritional Hierarchy For Fat loss just may be my favorite part to talk about.

A quick rehash of what we've learned so far:

First, you need to get your calories accounted for. This makes up 70% of the equation or more.

Second, you need to be sure your macronutrients are in order.

This means that you get enough protein and you make sure not to go "extreme" with your carbs/fats.

(Basically, don't eat "zero carb", even though "Keto" is all the rage right now.....)

After you have your calories and your macros taken care of, it's time to discuss the third most important part.....**micronutrition**.



Even though calories are WAY more important (about 70% of the equation) and so are macros (about 15% of the equation), and micronutrition is only about 8% of the equation (it's science).....I like to spend a bit more time talking about micronutrition.

Seriously - it's my favorite step in the pyramid to discuss, no lie.

Why, you ask?

Because this the the part of fat loss that Everybody. Gets. Wrong.

Everybody.

If you haven't guessed by now, AFTER your calories are taken care of, and your macros are taken care of, the next item you should be looking at is your micronutrition.

What is micronutrition?

Simply stated - micronutrition is the "healthfulness" of your diet, when viewed in its entire context.

Brief primer - there are two main components to food:

1. Macronutrients

2. Micronutrients

Macronutrients are the part of the food that contains the calories - the protein, the carbs, and the fat.

Micronutrients are the part of the food that doesn't contain calories - but contain important pieces that help your body function properly.

Stuff like vitamins, elements, minerals, fiber, and even water could be thrown into this category.

After you have your calories and your macros in place, it's time to start looking at the actual foods you eat and make sure you're asking yourself the following questions:

- > Am I eating enough green/colorful vegetables and plant material in my diet?
- > How much fiber am I taking in each day?
- > Am I eating a wide variety of lean protein sources?

- > Am I getting enough fatty fish in my diet?
- > How hydrated am I throughout the course of the day?
- > Am I eating any foods that make me feel like crap (perhaps dairy/wheat/etc.)?
- > Are my carbohydrate sources filling me up properly and providing me with enough fuel?
- > Am I limiting treats to "every once in awhile" treats?

Now, onto the good part.....

How Does Everyone Get This Step Wrong?!?

Think about this ==> you decide to go on a diet.

What's the FIRST thing that MOST people look at when they go on a diet?

Any answers?

Most people think,

**"I have to go to the store and get healthy food! I'm a diet!
Time for salads, chicken, broccoli, and almonds! Because
they're HEALTHY, MAN!"**

But, but, but, but - ***this is Item Number THREE on our list!***

And it only clocks in at around 8% of your Nutritional Hierarchy
For Fat Loss!

Which isn't to say it's not important - because it is!

But when you're viewing the Hierarchy, you **MUST** nail each step
before you move onto the next step - no questions asked.

If you're not losing weight, **it's NOT because you're eating "less
healthy" foods.**

It's because your calories are out of line (almost certainly) or it's
because your macronutrients aren't on point (much less likely).

There isn't a food on this PLANET that you can eat that will make you lose fat.

None.

And there isn't a food on this PLANET that you can eat that will make you gain fat.

None.

And this is a big reason why I have issues with "gimmicky" diets.

Stuff like Paleo, Keto, Blood Type Diets, etc.

They tell you all these foods are "toxic" to our bodies, and they guarantee you will lose fat if you eliminate them.

And frankly, that's pure bullshit.

These diets work for one reason and one reason only:

They indirectly cause a calorie deficit.

That's it and that's all.

One more thing.....your micronutrition will take a bit of trial and error.

This is where you'll have to be REALLY good at testing out different food types within your calories and your macros and gauge how your body responds.

For me PERSONALLY, I've found.....

> That I can only eat just a bit of dairy before I feel like a bloated hog who just chowed down on slop all day long.

> That if I eat gluten, my wife will kick me out of bed due to gas issues.

> That too much garlic equals SBD farts that will make most grown people's eyes water and gag reflex kick into full gear.

> That white rice is far and away the most filling carbohydrate source for me.

> That adding a tablespoon of psyllium husk to my morning protein shake gives me the regularity of a Greek God.

So what is my advice for you?

Tinker with things - once you get to this point.

See if you can make some "discoveries" on your own.

But don't - for one second - think that making these changes are going to cause you to start to lose fat.

You may feel better.

You may be less bloated.

You may have more energy.

But they will **NOT - under ANY circumstances - cause you to lose fat.**

Onto Step 4.....

Step 4 =====> MEAL TIMING AND FREQUENCY

Step 4 is so *hot right now*.....

Everyone thinks this is their ticket to abs that you can wash your frilly underthings with.

Seriously - I get questions all the time regarding this topic.....**Meal Timing And Meal Frequency.**



The simple definition of this:

When you eat and how many times per day you eat.

Now, before we really dive in, let's review, shall we?

The Nutritional Hierarchy For Fat Loss (So Far)

Item #1 (70%) - Overall Calorie Intake

Item #2 (15%) - Macronutrient Breakdown

Item #3 (8%) - Micronutrition, Fiber, and Hydration

As you can see, the first 3 items take you about 93% of the way there!

So, does it really matter how many times per day you eat and when you eat?

Kind of.

BUT, it's important to know, that your meal timing and meal frequency doesn't mean squat if your calories aren't controlled and you're not eating the proper amount of macronutrients - protein especially.

Now, let's assume calories are controlled, macros are controlled, and you're eating mostly whole foods.

If that's true, then you NAILED the first 3 items.

Assuming this.....what does the science and evidence really say about meal timing and meal frequency?

Well.....for the most part.....it says it doesn't matter a ton.

But it does still matter.....**a little bit.**

Let's talk extremes for a minute, shall we?

Extreme #1 ==> Eat one meal per day.

If meal timing/frequency doesn't matter, then on one end of the spectrum, in theory, you should be able to eat one meal per day, and you'll be just fine.

From a sheer fat loss perspective, this is likely true.

But from a muscular retention perspective, and from an "enjoyment of your diet" perspective, this is almost certain to be incorrect.

This can cause gastronomic issues and leave you ravenous with low energy while you're not eating.

Now, the other extreme.....

Extreme #2 ==> Eat itty, bitty meals every 3 hours.

This is the old myth of "stoking your metabolic fire" by eating small meals.

Now, let's get this clear - anyone who says you need to eat frequently to keep your metabolism high.....is totally, 100% incorrect.

Your metabolism DOES increase after you eat a meal.

But here's the thing - **it increases in proportion to the size of the meal you eat.**

Eat bigger meals, and your metabolism spikes higher for a longer amount of time.

Eat smaller meals, and your metabolism spikes just a little bit for a shorter amount of time (but it does so more frequently because you are eating more frequently).

Overall, the net effect over the course of the day is negligible.

So, how often should you eat? When should you eat?

A few guidelines for you:

Intermittent Fasting is really popular right now.

And while it *can* be a great tool for compliance, it's not for everyone.

I wouldn't recommend intermittent fasting under the following conditions:

> You have a goal to build muscle.

> You are a woman.

Especially #2.

Pushing the IF window into the afternoon has proven to be problematic in women. It can mess with your hormonal profile and cause auto-immune issues.

If you don't like breakfast (and you're a woman), I would recommend eating by 10 am at the absolute latest.

If you have a goal of building muscle, I would recommend eating at least 3 times per day - breakfast, lunch, and dinner - and getting a minimum of 25 grams of protein for each of those meals.

Being sure you have adequate protein in your system will maximize "MPS" - or Muscle Protein Synthesis. Which is a fancy way of saying you'll have protein in your system to aid in building muscle.

Side note: ***The "anabolic window" is vastly overrated.*** You don't need to eat a shake within minutes of ending your workout.

Simply be sure you don't train and then go to bed - as long as you eat a protein rich meal after you train and before you hit the hay, you've got your bases covered.

So again.....what should you do?

You should make sure your meal timing and frequency matches your lifestyle and preferences.

You don't like breakfast?

Eat something light to get some food in your belly, but don't feel the need to eat "breakfast like a king".

Or skip it (if you're a man).

Scared to eat food and/or carbs before bed?

Don't be.

This truly doesn't matter. Eating and then going to sleep will not cause fat gain - as long as your total calories are controlled.

But the BIGGEST catch is this - whatever you decide for your meal frequency/timing - **stick to it like glue!**

Having a standard meal frequency and eating at the same times each day allows you to take advantage of "hormonal entrainment".

Which means you will get used to eating at certain times and in certain amounts.

And your body's metabolic rhythm will reduce your hunger throughout the day.

whew

I just gave you a lot there.

Anyone want to guess what the last thing we're going to talk about is?

There's only ONE more piece to the puzzle!

Step 3,104 =====> SUPPLEMENTATION



Here's the list of supplements that will cause fat loss (grab 'em quick!):

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Okay.....just kidding.....I actually WILL talk about fat loss supplements.....

Sooooo, there's this little part of me that **doesn't even want to talk about this.**

I mean, this is the bread and butter of the fitness industry right here.

And when I say "industry", I mean the Juggernaut that makes a gazillion dollars off of you.....in hopes that you purchase their pills, powders, and shakes.....

This is the last piece of the puzzle, but that's only a figure of speech, frankly.

When it comes to fat loss, there are pieces that are REALLY, REALLY important.

Those pieces are:

1. Calories

2. Macronutrients

Those two items - and in that order - will dictate around 85% of the equation for you.

You **MUST** get your calories in check.

And only **AFTER** your calories are in check can you start to look at your macros.

If you have your calories in check **AND** your protein is at an adequate amount (around 1 gram per pound of lean body mass), then you can look at the next two factors:

3. Micronutrients/Hydration/Fiber

4. Meal Timing And Meal Frequency

Your calories are good.

Your macros are good.

Now, you can start looking at the vitamins, minerals, elements, and fiber in your diet.

You're still good? Eating mainly whole foods with enough fiber?

Staying properly hydrated?

Okay, cool, then you can take a peek at when you eat and see if it makes a difference.

And after that?

Hell, you're 99% of the way there.

There's really no need to go any further.....

BUT for the sake of full disclosure, there **ARE** just a few supplements that **MIGHT** help you lose fat.

DISCLAIMER - exactly zero of these supplements will cause fat loss. None.

They *might* help a bit if everything else is knocked out.

And here they are:

1. Protein supplements

If you're struggling getting your protein in, there's a bit of research showing that whey protein aids a bit in fat loss.

They're not a requirement at all, though. I've coached hundreds who have never had a single whey shake in their lives - and have lost fat very rapidly.

2. Caffeine

Yep, there's a reason why coffee is actually a fairly good ally in the battle of the bulge.

Caffeine helps to blunt hunger. Your morning coffee will ease hunger pangs and give you a little burst of energy to help you power through your ravenous periods.

If you can handle the jitters, of course.

3. Fish Oil

If you're like me, and you don't eat nearly enough fatty fish, fish oil can help with that - and aid in fat loss as well.

BUT, here's the thing - you CANNOT just go buy some fish oil and take the recommended dosage.

Low quality fish oil is everywhere. And it really doesn't do shit if you take it as recommended.

You need to look for fish oil that has EXACT amounts of "EPA" and "DHA" in it.

You're going to need 2 grams of EPA and 1.5 grams of DHA, daily, in order to get the dosage that *might* make a difference for you.

No "proprietary blends", either. You've gotta shell out the dough and get the good stuff.

*****I want you to notice something.** Notice that I didn't give you any links to anything. I don't want you to rely on supplements. Search for the least expensive, highest quality options out there. But I'm not going to "spam" you with nonsense.

I want you to get healthy - and save you money as well. ;)

Thus concludes our series on the Nutritional Hierarchy For Fat Loss.

With supplements, notice what I left out.

There are no fat burners, fat blockers, fat eliminators, Hydroxycut, or anything else.

Those are just scams - steer clear and be smart.

I hope you find this Guide useful - my hope is that you take it to heart, take action, and start getting healthy - the right way.

Best,

Jason Helmes

Anyman Fitness

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