

Calories and Consistency

KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON WHAT YOU EAT TO UNCOVER THE POWER OF THE 80/20 PHILOSOPHY.

By Ashley Ryan



ANTHONYPAZ © 123RF.COM

Many believe that the harder they workout, the more weight they will lose. But according to Bianca Gillett, director of fitness at Newport Beach Country Club, your nutrition plan is often more important than your exercise routine.

Fitness can be beneficial for many things, from increasing energy levels to building strength, but when your nutrition is out of balance, your progress is definitely hindered. If you truly want to change the way your body looks and feels, delve into the specifics

about nutrition. Learning how to monitor your calories and macronutrients can change how you plan your meals while realizing the importance of consistency can ensure you're building the right habits for long-term success.

THE SPECIFICS OF CALORIC DEFICIT

Before you can learn about the science behind healthy eating, you'll need to learn what calories really are: units of energy. "Everything you eat and drink contains

calories, and your body burns calories every day to fuel essential functions, like breathing, digestion and circulation, plus your daily activities and workouts," Gillett explains.

If you eat more calories than you burn, the excess is stored as fat. But if you eat less than you burn, you'll be in a caloric deficit and your body will begin burning stored fat for energy instead of the food you're eating.

Each pound of fat equals 3,500 calories, meaning that—through eating less, exercising more or a combination of both—you need to

TIPS FOR STAYING ON TRACK

Embrace these helpful hints to reach your health and weight-loss goals in less time.

- Keep a log of your meals and snacks: “Use apps or accountability sheets to track meals, snacks, drinks and even fun foods,” says Bianca Gillett, director of fitness at Newport Beach Country Club. “Awareness is key.”
- Plan out your “cheat” meals, or the 20% of the 80/20 method: “If you know you have a dinner out or an event, eat lighter, protein-rich meals earlier in the day to balance it out,” she notes.
- Don’t punish yourself for slip-ups: “One meal doesn’t erase all progress unless you let it spiral into multiple days of overeating,” she explains. “Get back on track with your next meal.”
- Prioritize protein in your diet: “It helps you feel fuller, preserves muscle and keeps your metabolism humming,” Gillett adds.
- Keep the big picture at the top of mind: “A pound of fat is 3,500 calories,” she says. “Progress may feel slow, but consistent habits compound into lasting results.”



STARUSH © 123RF.COM

create a shortage of 3,500 calories for each pound you’d like to lose.

When you’re planning your meals, consider what you’ll get these calories from. Macronutrients, including protein, fat and carbohydrates, each play a different role. Protein helps build muscle and enhance recovery while carbohydrates are your main source of energy. Fat helps with things like vitamin absorption, brain health and hormone levels.

“The balance of macros matters,” Gillett says. “For example, a diet high in protein helps preserve muscle during weight loss and keeps you fuller longer, which makes sticking to a caloric deficit easier. Carbohydrates and fats are equally important, but when eaten in excess, they can quickly tip you into a surplus.”

Basically, you want to focus on burning more calories than you eat so that, over time, you’ll start to shed pounds. “It’s not about starving yourself or extreme restriction, because that can cause other health problems

we want to avoid—like burnout or fatigue and chronic illnesses—if done for too long,” she adds. “It’s about making small, consistent choices that create a sustainable gap between what you consume and what you burn.”

CONSISTENCY OVER PERFECTION

Though it may be hard to believe, every meal matters. Being consistent is the biggest key to helping you lose weight. According to Gillett, one overindulgent meal can erase several days worth of effort. Whether it’s a calorie-dense takeout meal on the weekend, overeating during happy hour or eating a brunch dish that you think is healthy but is really packed with carbs, it’s easy to fall into a trap when it comes to food.

Of course, the point is not to be made to feel like you’re never allowed to have any fun. You still want to enjoy what you eat. “The point ... is that small, consistent deficits matter more than one ‘perfect’ day followed by overindulgence,” she says.

Sometimes, when eating healthy consistently, you can feel discouraged when you’re not seeing the number on the scale go down. But you may just be missing the mark of the caloric deficit by a small amount. Gillett recommends trying the 80/20 philosophy, which encourages you to aim for what’s sustainable rather than perfection.

The 80/20 method says that, 80% of the time, you eat nutrient-dense whole foods, such as lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats. Then, the other 20% of the time, enjoy cocktails, desserts or indulgent dinners out with friends. “By planning for them, you avoid the all-or-nothing cycle of strict dieting followed by binge eating,” Gillett notes. “This balance creates freedom without sabotage. You still enjoy life while maintaining progress toward your goals.”

**CONTACT INFO: BIANCA GILLETT
BGILLETT@NEWPORTBEACHCC.COM**