

Lifestyle Fitness and Nutrition

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Nutrition: How important is it?

As stated last month, nutrition is probably the most important piece of the healthy lifestyle puzzle, and usually the limiting factor in performance. In this article I will cover the topic generally, and after this series of articles I will go more into detail.

First of all you must realize that all foods are made of the macronutrients protein, carbohydrates, and fats. Micronutrients such as vitamins, minerals and water will be covered in a later article. Proteins are made of amino acids and is the nutrient that builds and repairs tissue, such as muscle. Carbohydrates are the best source of energy that you can give your body. Fats are also a good source of energy, having twice the calories, but can easily be stored as body fat.

Protein contains 4 calories per gram. So 10 grams of protein would yield 40 calories. Protein consumption should be high enough to ensure your body has sufficient amino acids to repair body tissue. Also, muscles will use some amino acids, called branched chain amino acids, as fuel, this is why athletes need extra protein. Athletes consume ample amounts of protein, because it is broken down during intense exercise and used as fuel by the muscles. Extra protein needed for muscle gain is actually low, you need extra protein because muscles will use these branched chain amino acids as fuel and you still need some left for repairing of the muscles. The USRDA is .8 grams per pound of body weight. Athletes usually will consume 1 to 2 grams per pound. Some extreme athletes or advanced bodybuilders and powerlifters will consume even more.

Carbohydrates also contain 4 calories per gram. So 15 grams of carbohydrates will have 60 calories. Carbohydrates are the best energy source for the body. Realize however, that carbohydrates are not created equally. Basically there are two types of carbohydrates and they are complex and simple. Complex carbohydrates can even be broken down further into starchy and fibrous. An example of a starchy carbohydrate would be a potato, and fibrous would be broccoli. Simple carbohydrates can also be broken into smaller groups, but for know it is beyond the scope of this article. Simple carbohydrate examples would be sugar, lactose and fructose. Simple sugars should be avoided because of the intense insulin response. Insulin helps carry nutrients into cells, such as muscle cells and fat cells. This is why a steady insulin level should be achieved. You don't want your insulin levels to raise or lower abruptly. When blood sugar levels get too high insulin is released by the pancreas to lower the blood sugar level. It does this by helping the transportation of nutrients into cells. When your liver and muscle glycogen stores become full then the rest is stored in fat cells. When blood sugars get too low, glucagon is released by the pancreas to help raise blood sugar levels back to an acceptable level. Your body will strive to maintain this level, because your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord) always needs some blood sugar for normal functioning. In later articles I will explain the benefits of this level with exercise.

Next month I will pick up where I left off and explain some fat facts. This series of articles is intended to set a base level of knowledge for you, so when in later articles I go farther into detail you will understand and be able to follow along. Future articles will throw some science at you and astound you and hopefully help you understand why so many people are misinformed.

I help people achieve their fitness and nutrition goals every day, and when they stick to their diet, results are easy to come by. I believe there is no such thing as a hard gainer or someone who can't shed excess body fat, usually they are just misinformed and trying to listen to too many people. So call or come to my web site if you have any questions and hopefully I can help you reach your goals.

Until next time,

Tracy Anderson