**How to Create a Healthy Diet Plan**

The food that you eat will be the No.1 obstacle when trying to achieve your fitness goals. Whatever your diet plan—Paleo, vegan, low-carb, high-protein—consistency will be the hardest challenge. (After all, there’s a reason they call it the cheat day.)

Diets are often overly complicated and make it unrealistic for most people to follow them. It’s actually not that hard to see results from a diet—but it is hard to stick with a particular diet and maintain the results.

That’s why we’ve created this guide. Stick with these realistic steps and you can expect a healthier metabolism, more energy, more muscle, less fat, increased testosterone, and—most important—a different mentality when it comes to eating.

Before you read any further, ask yourself: What are the last three “bad” things that you ate? When was the last time you tried a “diet”? Why did it fall apart? These problems will come up again if you don’t fix them; most hurdles in fitness are behavioral problems that need to be altered. Your last diet most likely fell apart at one of three stages of eating: buying the groceries, preparing your meals, and eating your meals. Here’s how to fix those habits and start with good ones:

**How to prioritize grocery shopping for healthy eating**

This is where it all starts. If you’re the person buying the food for your kitchen, then try these strategies.

Go to the supermarket after the gym

You’ll feel motivated to keep up with all the hard work you just put in by buying the best options for your body. Just try to get some food in your system, because…

You shouldn’t shop on an empty stomach

This will shut up that voice inside your head that tells you to buy those amazing-looking Oreos. Shopping when you’re hungry triggers your cravings for fast, satisfying food—and that can spell the end to an otherwise careful diet plan.

Make a list

Stick to basics and add or rotate one new snack/meal a week to switch things up. Don’t know what to get? Start with the nine foods that should be in every diet.

Use a basket

It should be all you need. If you have the storage space for buying in bulk, prioritize the really healthy foods that you know you’ll be eating every day—chicken breasts, fish, healthy vegetables, and—of course—protein powder.

Plan your route through the grocery store

Avoid aimless wandering—it’ll make you susceptible to temptations. You’re on a mission every time you go. Get in, and get out.

Shop the perimeter

Most of the food you’ll need, like produce and fresh foods, is on the outside border of the supermarket. Avoid the snack and processed foods that poison the middle of the store.

Don’t be fooled by marketing buzzwords

Make sure you understand what marketing terms mean. Just because something is “natural,” “diet,” or “whole wheat,” don’t assume it’s healthy. Focus more on good foods you can eat rather than ones that you can’t. One exception to this rule? The USDA Certified Organic label, which is subject to strict regulations by the USDA. Certified Organic livestock are by definition cage-free, vegetarian-fed, free-roaming, and not subjected to antibiotics or hormones; likewise, organic plants are nonGMO and strictly regulated so they’re not subjected to harmful additives.

How to cook healthier

You’ve just had a long and stressful day at work, and the thought of cooking seems horrible—so follow these strategies to avoid the path of fast food.

Prep your meals for the week

Remember how grandma made a big pot of chicken soup on Sundays so you could eat leftovers throughout the week? She was on to something. Prepare your meals for the week ahead, and get in the routine. It won’t feel like “dieting,” and it’ll save you the effort of thinking about what the hell you’re going to eat every day.

Measure out your nutrients

Calories can sneak up on you with portions that are larger than you think. Use the nutrition facts to your advantage so you know how many macronutrients—carbs, fats, and proteins—go into your body. That’s not to say you should count calories, but you should balance out your consumption to make you get enough protein (for building muscle) and fats and carbs (for energy).

Don’t eat boring, but watch your “flavorizers”

Some of the healthiest meals can be ruined by things you put on to make it taste better, like salad dressing (loaded with fat) or barbecue sauce (packed with sugar). Find healthy alternatives like spices and herbs, which don’t add any fat and sugar, or a low-calorie hot sauce.

How to eat healthier

You’ve bought and prepared your healthy meals. Now it’s time to enjoy!

Take your time

Enjoy your food to avoid eating faster than your mind can register it being full. It takes the body and mind about 20-30 minutes to acknowledge you’re satisfied.

Use your nondominant hand

Use your other hand to slow you down.

Build your support group

Focus on the relationships with the people you’re eating with by enjoying good conversation. Talk about your struggles and triumphs with trying to reach your goals. This will slow down your eating, and get your mind right to stay focused.

Drink water

Your beverages should have zero calories. Coffee is OK, as long as you focus on healthy additives.

Follow the 80% rule

Eat until you’re 80% full whether you leave a couple of bites on your plate or do so by lowering the portion size during meal prep time.

Enjoy small meals

You should be eating small meals throughout the day to avoid overeating binges.