

Sets – Reps – Pounding... and Diet

By

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Okay, here we go again. How many sets and reps and how much weight should I use? Sound familiar? How many times have seasoned bodybuilders had the question presented and how many times have you seen it posted on a bodybuilding site or read it in the “mail” column of a magazine? Thousands of times at least, right! For a beginner knowing the answer is usually just one point of many frustrations they have, “how many and how much”.

The next question asked just as often is about diet. This one has either one extreme or the other. “What can I do to gain some weight really fast?” Or “what can I do to shed some weight really fast?” Since I believe in a more common sense approach to both I often see amazement on peoples faces when I tell them my opinion to both questions. There being no secret or magical process they seem almost shocked that I offered just a common sense response.

The much emphasized pump, nerve impulse, muscle contraction, and muscle workload all represent fundamental components for growth experienced through exercise. These aspects... void of elements such as nutrition, recuperation, mental state and concentration all play an integral part of muscular development.

If you subscribe to a concept that I do, the one that says: Every individual is exactly that, an individual, and no two people are the same; what works for one may not another. Answering “how many and how much” is more complex than it appears. Certainly there are rules of thumb guidelines and suggested set, rep, and poundage schemes for a true beginner but even more advance trainees ask the same question at different times in their careers.

Magazines and articles featuring champions' present variations of how many sets, reps and poundage are to be used during workouts. Some realize progress from shorter more intense workouts while others need longer less intense sessions. Some progress while performing six to eight reps with heavy poundage – others use a higher rep pattern of twelve to fifteen with lighter weights.

How do you know what to do with all the conflicting information? Experiment! Accept your own bodily response to stimuli as what you should do and then don't marry it but have the courage and sense to change it around from time to time. Don't complicate or worry about it so much. It's the body's ability to recuperate that is of utmost importance.

Reach down... pick up the iron... and do something with it. You can look back fifty, seventy-five, even a hundred years ago and see bodybuilders with physiques that would be admired today. Back then they didn't know about whey protein, fast and slow twitch muscle fibers, pec dec's, linear bearing smith machines. For the most part none of them ever used a pulley or cable unit. Heck even most gyms didn't have cables or pulleys. It was the cold hard iron and human flesh coming together to form good old sweat. The result was increase in muscle size and strength.

Much to do about nothing is what I call a lot of what I am asked or contacted about. I see the same as I "surf" the internet's ever growing group of bodybuilding sites. It seems like each week someone is seeking the same answer to the same question that was asked just last week. Fundamentals are where it is; at least until you are at the stage you need the final little touches to set your physique off. It's not after you've only been bodybuilding for a couple of years or less.

Sure some will disagree with me on this and that's fine. For me I'd rather perform a curl with enough resistance until I feel the muscle fatigue and the biceps

pumped than to sit around and worry about how many sets and reps I need to perform and how much weight I need to use. Just get up and do it!

Dieting for the purpose of gaining or losing weight is no more complicated than what I have described for sets, reps, and poundage. One need use only common sense to see results. Today however, there are some considerations that must be given due to the fact a large number of individuals are on prescribed medication for one reason or another. All medications have side effects and one of the most common is weight gain. If you are taking any medications you need to be aware of any interactions with foods, or supplements as well as the side effects. Always check with your pharmacist or doctor.

I've written many times how basic it all is. It's a matter of balance and portion. Not taking in more than your lifestyle uses or it will be stored and that is exactly what you do not want. Without going to extremes and without doing a complete analytical process, the following basic information is provided as a guide.

You have to keep a watch on everything you eat. You need to keep a check on calorie consumption and balance your protein, carbs, and fats. In addition take a protein supplement and a good vitamin mineral tablet for added insurance that your system is getting all it needs. None of this need be expensive.

Some bodybuilder's feel the most result producing diet is achieved when it is made up of; 40% protein, 40% carbs, and 20% fat. Others prefer a different ratio. The following information guide is presented as a general overview. The percentages listed under each category can be used regardless of your daily calorie consumption just as the 40% - 40% - 20% just mentioned.

Protein:

Description: Protein is essential to human life. Your skin, bones, muscles and organ tissue all contain protein. It's found in your blood, hormones and enzymes

too. Protein is found in a great many plant foods. It comes from animal sources as well. Legumes, poultry, seafood, meat, dairy products, nuts and seeds are your richest sources of protein. Protein is the most important nutrient needed in building muscle but protein alone will not do the trick.

Excess consumption of protein is just as bad for a bodybuilder, or anyone for that matter, than consuming too little protein. Either, at the extreme level will result in problems.

Recommendation: Between 10 percent and 35 percent of your total daily calories — 50 to 175 grams a day — can come from protein. This recommendation is based on a 2000-calorie diet. Bodybuilders however should consume roughly 1 gram of protein for every pound of body weight.

I realize many advise higher amounts of protein but I have found the 1 to 1 ratio best for me as well as having others make the same observation.

Carbohydrates:

Description: Carbohydrates are your body's main energy source. Complex carbohydrates include legumes, grains and starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, peas and corn. When carbohydrates stored in the body are depleted too far, the body will convert precious muscle-building protein into glucose instead of regular carbohydrates to give the body the energy it needs.

Eat the majority of carbohydrates early in the day and immediately after workouts. Simple carbohydrates are found mainly in fruits and milk, as well as in foods made with sugar, such as candy and other sweets. These should be avoided.

Recommendation: Get 45 percent to 65 percent of your daily calories from complex carbohydrates. Emphasize complex carbohydrates, especially from

whole grains and beans, and nutrient-rich fruits and milk. Limit or avoid entirely sugars from candy and other sweets. If you are a diabetic or have a blood glucose situation, you will need to adjust and limit carbs differently from someone who does not have those conditions.

Fat:

Description: Fats help your body absorb many essential vitamins, maintain the structure and function of cell membranes, and preserve the integrity of your immune system. But fat is a very concentrated energy source, providing twice as many calories per gram as carbohydrates and protein. And too much of certain types of fat — such as saturated fat and trans fat — can increase your blood cholesterol levels and your risk of coronary artery disease.

Fat is an important component in any well balanced nutrition program. It should not be avoided completely if optimum health is desired. Like with everything else, the consumption of fat should be kept in proper perspective.

Recommendation: Limit fat to 20 percent to 35 percent of your daily calories — 40 to 70 grams of fat a day if you consume a 2000-calorie diet. Emphasize fats from healthier sources, such as nuts and olive, canola and nut oils.

Saturated Fat:

Description: Saturated fat is most often found in animal products, such as red meat, poultry, butter and whole milk. Other foods high in saturated fat include coconut, palm and other tropical oils. Saturated fat is the main dietary culprit in raising your blood cholesterol and increasing your risk of coronary artery disease.

Recommendation: Limit your daily intake of saturated fat to no more than 10 percent of your total calories. This equals 20 grams of saturated fat if you consume a 2000-calorie diet. Saturated fat intake is part of your total daily allowance for fat.

Trans Fat:

Description: Trans fat comes from adding hydrogen to vegetable oil through a process called hydrogenation. This makes the fat more solid and less likely to spoil. Trans fat is a common ingredient in commercial baked goods — such as crackers, cookies and cakes — and in fried foods, such as doughnuts and french fries. Shortenings and some types of margarine also are high in trans fat.

Recommendation: The American Heart Association recommends that no more than 1 percent of your total daily calories be trans fat. If you consume 2,000 calories a day, that works out to 2 grams of trans fat or less.

Cholesterol:

Description: Cholesterol is vital to the structure and function of all your cells, but it's also the main substance in fatty deposits (plaques) that can develop in your arteries. Your body makes all of the cholesterol it needs for cell function. You get additional cholesterol by eating animal foods, such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products and butter.

Recommendation: Limit your intake of cholesterol to no more than 300 milligrams a day.

I realize many bodybuilders consume much more cholesterol per day than 300 mg and do not have heart or cholesterol problems. I also know others whose intake is far less than 300 mg of cholesterol and they do have high cholesterol. Is it in the genes? I believe to a large extent it is. It is not a bad idea to have regular blood work done to ensure the range of all properties.

Fiber:

Description: Fiber is the part of plant foods that your body doesn't digest and absorb. There are two basic types: soluble and insoluble. Insoluble fiber adds bulk to your stool and can help prevent constipation. Vegetables, wheat bran and

other whole grains are good sources of insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber may help improve your cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Oats, dried beans and some fruits, such as apples and oranges, are good sources of soluble fiber.

Recommendation: Women need 21 to 25 grams of fiber a day, and men need 30 to 38 grams of fiber a day.

Vitamins and Minerals:

Vitamins. These nutrients are needed for a variety of biological processes, among them growth, digestion and nerve function. Vitamins are involved in many processes that enable your body to use carbohydrates, fats and proteins for energy and repair. Though vitamins are involved in converting food into energy, they supply no calories.

Minerals. These nutrients are the main components in your teeth and bones, and they serve as building blocks for other cells and enzymes. Minerals also help regulate the balance of fluids in your body and control the movement of nerve impulses. Some minerals also help deliver oxygen to cells and help carry away carbon dioxide.

Protein Supplements:

There are many good brands on the market today. Each provides a flavor and texture that is sure to satisfy even the pickiest among us. As with any supplement know that is exactly what a protein supplement is... a supplement. Select a high quality product and prepare it according to labeling instruction.

Water:

Regardless of what you are trying to accomplish, water must be a key component in your plan. Drink at least eight large glasses a day.

Without getting into a complicated program you have the basic information for building a good diet. Just remember to keep portion sizes in range. This is where most fail. The great American buffet is the result of more expanded waist-lines than anything else in this country and that includes salads.

I've seen people go to a salad bar and load their plate so high they actually got more calories and fat than if they had ordered a hamburger and ice-cream sundae. It's common sense! It's not that difficult.

Now, having said all of that regarding nutrition and having followed all types of diets over the years, I have found the simplest way to calculate my needs are as follows.

Protein – 1.0 to 1.5 grams per pound of bodyweight.

Carbs – 0.5 to 1.0 grams per pound of bodyweight.

Fats – 0.25 to 0.5 grams per pound of bodyweight.

Rather than applying percentages based on a daily calorie intake of 2000, 2500, 3000, etc. You simply use the chart above and multiple it against your present weight.

I can't stress enough how simple an exercise and nutrition plan needs to be to produce results.

Just keep it simple and stick with it. There will be peaks and valleys, mountain tops and dark depths. Through it all; be true to yourself and no matter what...

Lift the iron, move the body, consume good food! Don't sweat the small stuff!

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