



NOURISH

moms into fitness

As a busy mom, you need a nutrition plan without cutting carbs for a week then dairy the next. It's time to find that sweet spot! What do I mean by sweet spot? Where life is balanced, no more yo-yo weight loss, a happy, sweet spot. This doesn't come from drastic diets and it doesn't come from extreme training. It comes from tweaking this and filling up on that. If you're like me, I get overwhelmed by all the "buzz words" I see online and in the news on things that could harm me or my family. It's tough to keep track and take any action cause most of the time, I just want to turn my back and forget I even heard it. But, as mom's, we want to do what's best for our family and for ourselves – we want to live a long, happy, healthy life without cutting out all the "fun".

Here at Moms Into Fitness, we seek balance. We need to show our kids balance. That does not mean eating broccoli every day, all day. Learn about our philosophy on nutrition with my 3-minute video [rant!](#) And that's where our Registered Dietitian steps in. She is here to give you sound nutritional advice, not the latest fad or the latest it worked for a friend anecdotal research. She will help you find that sweet spot based on her degree and 15 years working with moms!

Nourish will nourish you body from the inside-out by teaching you. Who wants to be a meal plan for the rest of their life? Meal plans have a special place, but Nourish is a "loose" less restrictive meal plan. Stephanie Margolis, R.D. and myself will provide structure and recipes. Your goal is to uncomplicate the complicated food world and fill your body with wholesome foods. Each week we will concentrate on something different. You will find all of week one in this packet. This is where we introduce a form of intermittent fasting, teach the staples of Nourish and come alongside your eating patterns for breakfast and snack time, including 8 delicious & nutritious recipes.

During week two we tackle inflammation and what you should be eating, as well as 5 solid dinner recipes complete with shopping list. Week three will cover fast food, GMOs and the hidden omega 6 dangers. Week four brings on the macros and supplements chat. Week five and six we talk about weight loss vs weight maintenance and is a plant based diet for you.

But we want you to be familiar with the location of our [Recipe Box](#). Because our Moms Into Fitness app is made for TV, you will only see our workout videos in the app. Our Recipe Box is based on a url/website. Bookmark it! We just want you to be familiar with the location of our Recipe Box. Because our [Moms Into Fitness app](#) is made for TV, you will not see the Recipe Box within the navigation unless you are on our url. Bookmark it!

 Lindsay

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EAT WELL & NOURISH

Research shows that proper nutrition is a key component of weight loss. However, when most of us hear the word diet, we immediately think of restrictions, limitations and starvation. So, let's not talk about dieting -- let's instead talk about making a change in the way we see food. Think fuel, not frustration. For example, when choosing foods to eat, consider how those foods are going to nourish your body and give you the energy you need to tackle your To Do list. For most of your meals and snacks, pick whole, nutritious foods that are going to satisfy both your cravings as well as your body's dietary needs. And, don't worry, we're not saying you can't enjoy eating out and we're definitely not saying you can't have ice cream (and enjoy it, too!) with your kids on a hot summer day. So, no more drastic diets or extreme this or that -- use the following staples to create better habits that will lead you to a more fulfilling (and filling) relationship with food.

Can I use Nourish while pregnant or nursing?

We have some extra guidelines for pregnancy and nursing. Below you will find advice from our Registered Dietitian (click to read):

- [Pregnancy](#)
- [Nursing](#)

We begin Nourish by introducing a form of intermittent fasting. Intermittent Fasting, in any form, is not recommended for pregnant or nursing moms. All other dietetic advice/information can apply to your body's special needs during pregnancy or nursing.

Stay Hydrated

How do you know you're drinking enough water? A good rule of thumb is to drink half of your body weight in ounces. And since you will be working out, you want to add about 8 ounces more for every 15 minutes of exercise.

Did you know water helps you fight inflammation? Your body is fighting to reduce the amount of inflammation in your body when exposed to pollution, toxins, and a lack of nutrients. While this hard work goes unseen, there are times that the body can't fight off everything. That's why it's important to help out our systems as much as we can. There are many ways we can help the body fight to reduce inflammation, one being [healthy hydration to battle inflammation](#). When we aren't drinking enough water, consuming sugary drinks, or enjoying a few too many cocktails, we are promoting inflammation in our body. However, if you increase your water intake and choose wisely your adult beverages, your body will be able to reduce inflammation and help you fight off many diseases.

Sugar

Strive to stay away from added sugars, as they tend to sneak into so many of the foods we like to eat. And, keep things the way nature intended – simple and natural. For example, when you're craving something sweet, reach for fruit, hot blueberry tea or one of the tried and true recipes from our Recipe Box. To enhance the natural sweetness of our recipes, we've added ripe bananas, maple syrup, honey, coconut shreds, applesauce, and more. Keep in mind that naturally occurring sugars (which are found in everything from dairy to fruit) are completely okay!

You don't have to eliminate, but do minimize, candies, cookies, white breads, and other snacks and goodies with a high sugar content. A good rule of thumb to follow is if it's naturally sweet, it is okay.

Eating Out

Yes, you can go out to eat (it means no dishes!), and you will definitely find me out and about eating Mexican food and veggie or cheese pizza! But, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, you should be aware of portion sizes, as restaurant meals tend to be much larger than normal servings. Don't be afraid to bring home your leftovers and enjoy them for another lunch or dinner. Secondly, do your best to stay away from foods you don't normally eat, as you may find that your body has a harder time digesting foods that are unfamiliar. And, finally, if you are undecided about what to order, be sure to add as much color to your plate as possible. When we eat out, we tend to forget all about the produce. Adding color to your dish is a great way to integrate fruits and veggies while getting your body the nutrients, vitamins and minerals that it needs.

Processed Foods

Fill your pantry with whole foods - foods that haven't been processed, or are minimally processed and/or altered. Before you eat your food of choice, think about how it is made and strive to reach for foods that are wholesome or closest to their natural state. You will find whole foods even more filling and satisfying, as they contain more vitamins and minerals than those foods that have been processed. An easy way to determine a food's wholesomeness is by looking at the label – if the food doesn't have a label that's usually a win (i.e. fruit). But, if the label lists wheat flour, white flour, added sugar (which comes in many different forms), preservatives or words you cannot pronounce, it is best to pass on it in favor of something with fewer ingredients and more nutrients. While eliminating processed foods is a key part of nourishing your body, the first two weeks are about what you need to add to your nutrition. We zoom in on the processed stuff in week three of Nourish.

WEEK ONE

WEEK ONE EDUCATION

I encourage you to focus on the nutrition laid out for the week. That way it's not too overwhelming. That way you are integrating a lifestyle change.

The first three weeks include a meal guide. During week one we focus on breakfast and snacks. During weeks two and three we focus on dinner, complete with shopping lists.

You will find five days for the week, not seven days. Take your new knowledge and apply it on the weekends :) As I mentioned before our goal is to nourish you with education, not simply out a meal plan.

First up, intermittent fasting. The good news about this recent trend is that it's not just a fad promoted by companies or influencers, there is real science behind the why.

Intermittent Fasting: Is it for me?

Fats, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals – it's easy to see how people get overwhelmed by nutrition. The good news is that our approach to eating well and nourishing your body is not a diet. It is not strict, restrictive or limiting. It is not about deprivation, but about integration. Our approach to nourishment will teach you how to incorporate wholesome eating into your lifestyle and will leave you feeling energized and satisfied.

Fasting consists of restricting calorie intake during certain times (fasting) and choosing foods as often and necessary as desired (feeding). These fasting and feeding times are cycled and do not focus on WHAT you eat but WHEN you eat. There are three main types of fasting (outside of religious fasting) that have been studied: alternate day fasting; modified fasting; and time-restricted fasting. We've provided structure for WHEN to eat around your workout schedule, following time-restricted fasting. As you complete the full Nourish course you will see that week one tackles WHEN to eat, while weeks two through six tackle WHAT to eat. Research indicates following time-restricted fasting can provide big changes without having to change your dietary patterns. That said, we are starting week one, nourishing our bodies with breakfast and snack recipes.

Intermittent fasting is not something new, it has been part of many religions and cultures for centuries; however, its popularity has grown as of late with the emergence of new research showing potential health benefits. You may see sources telling you to intermittent fast, but that term can mean so much, so here we are going to dive into what this fasting thing is about.

Why Fast?

The good news about this recent trend is that it's not just a fad promoted by companies or influencers, there is real science behind the why. In both lab rat and human studies, scientists are looking for changes in weight status, glucose regulation, lipid (HDL, LDL, cholesterol) profiles, and inflammatory markers. These are all ways to measure one's health and disease risk. In the short-term (22 days to 5 weeks) many studies showed insulin levels decreasing, HGH (human growth hormone) levels increasing, and cell repair happening. It is noteworthy the HGH increased dramatically in several studies, because this hormone naturally helps the body promote fat loss and increase lean muscle. Additionally, when the body is fasting the gut and cells can rest and repair improving the gut microbiome (strongly linked to improved overall health). In the longer term, intermittent fasting has been linked to lowered inflammatory markers, improved brain health, and slowing of the aging process in both animals and humans.

WEEK ONE

Not a one-size-fits-all

This is all super exciting but fasting can come in many shapes. Fasting consists of restricting calorie intake during certain times (fasting) and choosing foods as often and necessary as desired (feeding). These fasting and feeding times are cycled and do not focus on WHAT you eat but WHEN you eat. There are three main types of fasting (outside of religious fasting) that have been studied: alternate day fasting; modified fasting; and time-restricted fasting. Let's take a glance at the details and study results of each type:

Type of Fasting	Fasting Details	Study Results*
Alternate Day Fasting	No calories on fasting days, on feeding days eat as desired	This type of fast resulted in modest weight loss, and improved metabolic profiles. However, participants reported extreme hunger so the ability to adhere to this schedule long-term is questionable.
Modified Fasting	On fasting days participants would eat about 20-25% of their prescribed calories (about 500 calories) and on feeding days they would eat to their set calorie limits.	In modified fasting, there was consistent weight loss in all studies but the effect on insulin regulation, lipid profiles, and inflammation markers were mixed
Time Restricted Fasting	This type of fasting is done daily and required participants to fast during certain hours of the day. These studies fasting periods ranged from 12-21 hours.	This type of fasting saw the most consistent and positive results. Participants lost weight, improved their metabolic profiles, reduced their risk for obesity, and decreased their risk for diabetes and some cancers.

*These findings are a summary of [16 studies](#).

Timing Can Be Everything

As you've probably concluded from above, the time-restricted fasting can be an effective way to improve your health. This schedule is also fantastic for moms because not eating for an entire day will make you hangry, and no one wants mamma hangry! When we really look at time restricted fasting the research has shown that consuming energy earlier in the day, combined with nightly fasting, can give you the best results. There are several reasons why:

- Nighttime eating can disrupt your circadian rhythm and is associated with higher risk for obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer (particularly breast cancer).
- Gastric emptying and blood flow are higher during the daytime. This means your stomach digests food faster and your body metabolizes it faster in the earlier hours.
- As the day goes on your metabolic response to glucose gets slower. This means foods you eat later in the day take longer for your metabolism to process.

WEEK ONE

What to do when you're a breakfast person:

It's a myth that you need breakfast immediately when you wake up, or that it helps with weight loss. In fact, extending your fast a couple hours into your day can help your body dig into your fat stores and boost weight loss. My advice? Drink a cup of water immediately upon waking up. This should curb cravings and give your body the hydration and energy you need to start your day. And simply eat breakfast within 2-5 hours of waking.

What to do when you exercise in the morning:

Unless you're planning on a high-intensity workout at least 50 minutes in length, you should have enough glycogen stored in your body to fuel your workout. If you work out for more than 50 minutes, I recommend eating half an apple to help you get through the workout. Then you can have your first full meal during your 8-hour window. If you find it difficult to get through your workouts, feel free to ease into the schedule. Perhaps you wait until 7 a.m. one morning to eat. Then, after a few days, push it to 8. Within a week, you should feel comfortable starting your eating window at 9 or later.

Bottom Line:

Intermittent fasting can have many health benefits beyond weight loss, especially time restricted fasting. Eating your food earlier in the day and allowing your body at least 12 hours to rest has been proven to improve your current and future health. While these studies only focus on the "when" of eating, we can't forget about the WHAT. Choosing foods that are wholesome, unprocessed, and filled with vitamins and minerals is best.

Before you start, a couple words of caution

Intermittent fasting is perfect for busy moms. But moms that are breastfeeding or pregnant should not restrict their eating. You need the extra nutrients and calories to feed your baby!

If you have any hormonal issues or autoimmune disorders, speak with your doctor first. It's possible that women have an increase, decrease or disruption in hormone production. If that's your case, we recommended trying intermittent fasting every other day. As with everything...there is no one size fits all;)

Also, there isn't enough research to suggest this eating schedule is safe for kids. Plus, if your kids are anything like mine, they eat all day!

WEEK ONE

Intermittent Fasting Schedule

- This framework, a form of intermittent fasting, will give your body 12 hours to dig into its fat stores rather than using up quick energy from recent meals, thus boosting weight loss. Below you will find four different templates outlining the best time to eat. Decide which one works best for you based on the time of day you exercise.
- Food Prep – We recommend that you put aside one hour per week to cut up your veggies and fruits and to prepare produce for your recipes. We also suggest that you pre-make your snacks (definitely try our Ranch Dip and protein balls!). If you take the time to prepare some of these easy snack ideas, you will be amazed by how many options you have when you open the fridge!
- Your post-workout snack should include protein (all snacks included in this packet contain protein).
- For the afternoon and evening workout time the meals are cut down to 75% to give the body time to digest and move through the GI tract before asking the body to supply blood to heart and muscles for exercise.
- Intermittent fasting in any form, is not recommended for pregnant or nursing moms.

Early Workout

6:00 AM	Workout
7:30 AM	Breakfast
10:30 AM	Snack
1:00 PM	Lunch
6:00 PM	Dinner
7:30 PM (Optional)	Light snack: 1 cup of a smoothie or a handful of almonds and a few slices of an apple

WEEK ONE

Mid-Morning Workout

7:30 AM	Breakfast
9:30 AM	Workout
10:30 AM	Snack
1:00 PM	Lunch
3:30 PM	Snack
6:00 PM	Dinner

*If you find you are hungry, add more protein and fiber to your 3:30 pm snack or dinner

Afternoon Workout

8:00 AM	Breakfast
10:00 AM	Snack
12:30 AM	Lunch (75% of normal portion)
2:30 PM	Workout
3:30 PM	Snack
6:00 PM	Dinner

WEEK ONE

Evening Workout

8:30 AM	Breakfast
10:30 AM	Snack
1:00 PM	Lunch
3:30 PM	Snack
6:00 PM	Dinner (75% normal portion)
8:00	Workout

*If needed, a light snack: 1 cup of a smoothie or a handful of almonds and a few slices of an apple

WEEK ONE

DAY 1

Breakfast	Avocado Toast
Lunch	Prepare a homemade salad using our homemade salad dressings or grab one of our lunch recipes. The goal is to prepare your lunch using wholesome ingredients from home.
Dinner	Prepare your normal family dinner
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

DAY 2

Breakfast	Banana Pancakes
Lunch	Prepare a homemade salad using our homemade salad dressings or grab one of our lunch recipes. The goal is to prepare your lunch using wholesome ingredients from home.
Dinner	Prepare your normal family dinner
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Peanut Butter Balls

DAY 3

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Prepare a homemade salad using our homemade salad dressings or grab one of our lunch recipes. The goal is to prepare your lunch using wholesome ingredients from home.
Dinner	Prepare your normal family dinner
Snack	Peanut Butter Balls
Snack (optional)	Sweet Potato Waffle

WEEK ONE

DAY 4

Breakfast	Egg Bites
Lunch	Prepare a homemade salad using our homemade salad dressings or grab one of our lunch recipes. The goal is to prepare your lunch using wholesome ingredients from home.
Dinner	Prepare your normal family dinner
Snack	Avocado Toast
Snack (optional)	Basic Green Smoothie

DAY 5

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Prepare a homemade salad using our homemade salad dressings or grab one of our lunch recipes. The goal is to prepare your lunch using wholesome ingredients from home.
Dinner	Prepare your normal family dinner
Snack	Banana Pancakes
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

WEEK ONE

SHOPPING LIST - Week One

Veggies

2 cups fresh spinach
1 ripe avocado
1 carrot
1 tomato
1/4 cup sliced mushrooms
1 medium sweet potato
Veggies for dipping

Fresh Fruit

1 pineapple
1 mango
2 ripe bananas
1 cup Blueberries
1/2 cup Strawberries

Dairy Aisle

1 cup coconut Kefir or milk of choice
2 1/4 cups cottage cheese
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt 8 eggs
1 cup coconut milk or milk of choice

Spices

Garlic salt
Ground cumin
Ground paprika
Garlic powder
Onion powder
Ground Black Pepper Salt
Dried chives
Dried parsley
Vanilla Extract
Ground Cinnamon

Pantry Items

Ground Chia seeds or Flaxseed
Sliced bread
MCT oil
Collagen powder
Rolled Oats (1 1/2 cups)
Unsweetened Apple Sauce
Sliced Almonds
Peanut Butter with <3g sugar
Raisins (optiona)

WEEK ONE

BREAKFAST & SNACK TIME RECIPES

Instead of disrupting meal time at your home, we will steadily nourish your body every week. This week we are concentrating on breakfast and snacks.

Breakfast Banana Pancakes



INGREDIENTS

3 EGGS
1 BANANA, RIPE (ripe = sweet)
3/4 CUP ROLLED OATS
1/4 CUP UNSWEETENED APPLE SAUCE
1 TSP VANILLA
1/2 TSP CINNAMON
1/4 CUP SLICED STRAWBERRIES
1 TBSP SLICED ALMONDS

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Blend oats in a blender or food processor to grind into smaller pieces.

STEP 2: Add remaining ingredients and mix until completely blended. Heat lightly greased (ghee, coconut oil, etc.) griddle or pan on medium heat.

STEP 3: Scoop 1/3 batter and place on pan. Cook until brown (approx. 2 minutes), flip, and brown other side.

STEP 4: Top with fruit and almonds – can be made in advance or served immediately! You can also top with a smear of peanut butter (read the label to look for added sugars).

Recommended Servings: 2-4" cakes.

Peanut Butter Balls



INGREDIENTS

3/4 CUP ROLLED OATS
3 TBSP GROUND FLAXSEED
1/2 CUP PEANUT BUTTER
(<3g sugar on the label)
1/4 CUP RAISINS

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Layer ingredients in a bowl, mix until combined.

STEP 2: Roll into 1-inch balls. Store in refrigerator.

Recommended Servings: 2 balls

WEEK ONE

Basic Green Smoothie



INGREDIENTS

- 1 CUP SPINACH (FRESH)
- 1 CUP COCONUT MILK OR COCONUT WATER
- 1/2 CUP PINEAPPLE
- 1/2 CUP MANGO
- 1 BANANA (RIPE = SWEET)
- 1 TBSP CHIA SEEDS
- A FEW ICE CUBES

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Combine all ingredients in a blender and puree until the desired consistency. Add more water if needed.

Options: try these additions to sweeten your smoothie:

- Add a dash of vanilla extract and 1 Tbsp frozen coconut shreds
- Add 1 TSP of sugar and a few frozen strawberries

Recommended Servings: 1 Smoothie

Avocado Toast



INGREDIENTS

- 1 SLICE BREAD
- 1/2 AVOCADO

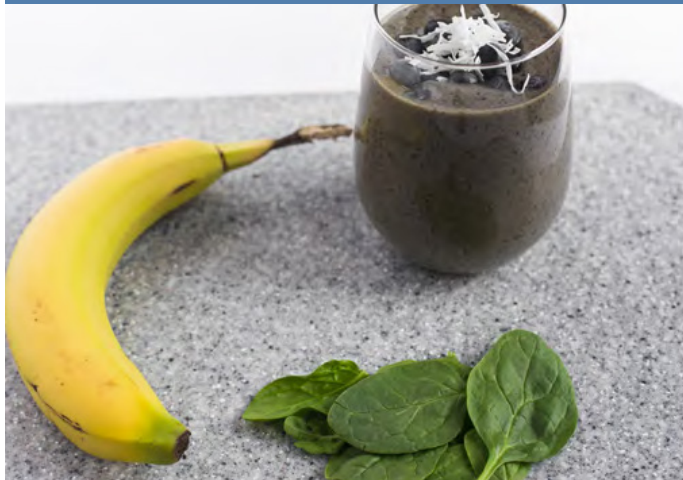
DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Toast bread and smear with avocado. Serve with fruit.

Recommended Servings: 1 Piece of Toast

WEEK ONE

Brain Power Smoothie



INGREDIENTS

1/2 CUP BLUEBERRIES
1 CUP SPINACH
1 CUP COCONUT KEFIR* (plain or the lowest sugar option you can enjoy)
1 TBSP MCT OIL
1 SCOOP COLLAGEN

Optional: 1 SCOOP PLANT-BASED PROTEIN POWDER.

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Combine as smoothie and enjoy!

Recommended Servings: 1 Serving.

Ranch Dip



INGREDIENTS

1 LB. CONTAINER COTTAGE CHEESE
1/2 CUP PLAIN GREEK YOGURT OR SOUR CREAM
1 TBSP DRIED PARSLEY
1 TBSP DRIED CHIVES
1 TSP ONION POWDER
1 TSP GARLIC POWDER
1/2 TSP BLAK PEPPER
SALT TO TASTE

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Combine all ingredients and serve with chilled veggies.

Recommended Servings: 1/4 cup dip & Unlimited Veggies

WEEK ONE

Egg Bites



INGREDIENTS

3 EGGS
1/4 CUP MILK
1/4 CUP COTTAGE CHEESE
1/2 CUP ROASTED VEGETABLES, CHOPPED
SEA SALT

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Mix all ingredients, except vegetables.
STEP 2: Pour into 12 mini-muffin tin. Top with vegetables.
STEP 3: Bake at 250 for 15-20 minutes.
Serve with 1 cup of fruit.

Recommended Servings: 2 Bites & A Piece of Fruit

Sweet Potato Waffle



INGREDIENTS

2 LARGE EGGS, DIVIDED
1 SMALL/MEDIUM SWEET POTATO, GRATED
1/4 TSP CUMIN
1/8 TSP PAPRIKA
1/8 TSP GARLIC SALT
1 TSP OIL (plus some extra for waffle iron and pan)

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Heat waffle iron and grease well. Set aside.
STEP 2: In a medium bowl, whisk 1 egg. Add in grated sweet potato (around a heaping cup), plus seasonings, and 1 tsp oil.
STEP 3: Once waffle iron has fully heated, pack in sweet potato hash mixture into iron, covering all of the quadrants. cook about 4- 5 minutes, until lightly golden.
STEP 4: When ready, gently remove the waffle with a butter knife and transfer to a plate.
STEP 5: Serve with a side of fruit
Recommended Servings: 1 Waffle

WEEK TWO

WEEK TWO EDUCATION

Let's demystify inflammation and understand what we need to know and what foods to eat. 'Inflammation' is one of these words. It sounds scary, does it cause illness, what should I do now, do I need to worry gahhhh! Let us help you. We answer the key questions you need to know today:

- What is inflammation?
- What causes chronic inflammation?
- What can I do to help myself now?
- What should I eat?
- 5 Anti-Inflammatory Heart Health recipes

Inflammation: what should I eat?

You're enjoying a nice walk with your family, when all of a sudden you take a little stumble and feel that little pull in your ankle. Oof! Sprained ankles are the worst! When this happens on the outside you may not see anything immediately, but inside the body your immune system senses the injured ligament, releases white blood cells to the site, and they do their work to repair your body. During the repair time you may notice your ankle becomes swollen, tender to touch, and maybe even red. All of these are signs of inflammation, which is exactly what you want to happen. If your body wasn't able to react in this way you wouldn't be able to heal correctly.

However, there's another type of inflammation, an invisible form that can show up as fatigue, mouth sores, joint pain, rashes, or even chest pain. This is often called chronic inflammation. It is when the body's immune system is stressed and begins the inflammatory process on healthy tissues and organs (without injury like detailed above). There are several reasons the immune systems' "on switch" gets flipped, which we will discuss next. When we don't take steps to fight the inflammation, or turn the process off, we start to see long term effects on our health. These effects can present as unhealthy arteries, increased risk for developing certain cancers, damaged organs, chronic pain, and fatigue.

Causes of Chronic Inflammation

The main reasons the body develops chronic inflammation are related to habitual lifestyle factors. These are the choices you make day-in and day-out that can slowly deteriorate your health. Studies have been able to narrow down the inflammation culprits to a few:

- Diets high in sugar: added sugars and those found in high-processed foods
- Refined and processed carbohydrates: the ones you are buying in packages and are also (likely) high in sugar too
- Cut back on alcohol: excessive alcohol intake has been correlated with increased inflammation in the body. This means, for women, more than one drink per day or 7 glasses over the course of a week.
- Excessive amounts of processed meats: diets with high amounts of packaged and processed meats have been linked to increased inflammation in the body.
- Sedentary lifestyle: even if you exercise a few times a week you may be sitting a majority of the remaining hours leading to an overall sedentary lifestyle.
- Vegetable oils: this one is a little more complicated as it is not specifically the vegetable oils causing inflammation; however, scientists believe that when you consume larger amount of vegetable oils it creates an imbalance in the omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acid ratios. This imbalance is believed to cause inflammation. (Want to know more about these fatty acids? Read this.)
- Unmanaged stress: You probably don't need another article on the importance of self-care but even from a chronic inflammation standpoint it is super important to take care of yourself and find ways to de-stress.

WEEK TWO

What Can I Do?

The good news about chronic inflammation is there are many things we can do to combat it, and most are found in our grocery aisles.

- **Limit:** Before you go shopping, clean out your fridge and pantry. Limit items that are highly processed, contain trans fats, are high in added sugars, and also red meat items. This does not mean you can never have these foods, it just means you want these foods to make up a small percentage of your diet.
- **Enjoy anti-inflammatory foods:** Load up on fruits, vegetables, foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, and whole-grain carbs. The main thing in these foods is the plethora of antioxidants. Antioxidants are awesome because they go around sucking up free-radicals which are the things that lead to inflammation. **QUICK FIX** – Try some water infused with strawberries & blueberries or a warm water with lemon and a sprinkle of cinnamon.
- **Move and relax:** Find ways to be more active above and beyond what you are doing now. If you find yourself at the desk most the day, get up and walk around a few times, if you are at home with little ones add in a walk or a light exercise while everyone is playing.

Exactly What Should I Eat?

While it may take some time to increase your activity level or decrease your stress, adding anti-inflammatory foods to your diet can happen today. Here are some of the top foods to add to your meal plan, especially when your goal is to fight inflammation:

- **Greens:** spinach, kale, brussel sprouts, cabbage
- **Colorful fruits:** grapes, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, oranges, avocado
- **Veggies galore:** cauliflower, tomato (technically a fruit), bell peppers, olives, celery
- **Omega-3 foods:** salmon, tuna, tofu, walnuts, flaxseed, soybeans, almonds
- **Spices:** garlic, rosemary, turmeric, ginger
- **Some extras:** Olive oil, green tea, red wine* (yes those antioxidants are floating around in there so enjoy within the recommendation noted above) *Side note about alcohol: Some forms of alcohol can actually lead to MORE inflammation in the body, particularly those high in sugar. Don't bank on alcohol to help fight inflammation in the body, instead, when you are choosing to enjoy a sip reaching for a red wine with phenolic compounds is your best bet.

When you think about fighting or preventing inflammation think about foods that are colorful, unprocessed, and add variety in those choices. If you think you're battling inflammation due to a food sensitivity read about our [Elimination Diet](#).

Anti-Inflammatory Smoothie

We all love a quick smoothie for breakfast or midday snack. This one contains many ingredients that are going to boost your energy while also protecting the body from free radicals which cause inflammation. If you find you have little time to prep during the day, place the ingredients in your blender at night and store in the fridge, when you're ready, give it a few whirls to puree and sip away! [Print Anti-inflammatory Smoothie](#)

Turmeric Cauliflower

Turmeric is one of the most recent anti-inflammatory finds. The power of this spice to fight inflammation, prevent against certain diseases, and keep the brain healthy is being proven over and over in the research. With a little spicy taste this is a super versatile spice. Here's a quick and easy way to get some inflammation fighting goodness on your plate. [Print Turmeric Cauliflower](#)

WEEK TWO

DAY 1

Breakfast	Avocado Toast
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Sweet Potato Bowl
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

DAY 2

Breakfast	Banana Pancakes
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Beef with Avocado Sauce & Turmeric Cauli
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Peanut Butter Balls

DAY 3

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Spicy Chicken & Spinach Soup
Snack	Peanut Butter Balls
Snack (optional)	Sweet Potato Waffle

WEEK TWO

DAY 4

Breakfast	Egg Bites
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Black Bean & Rice Skillet
Snack	Avocado Toast
Snack (optional)	Basic Green Smoothie

DAY 5

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	One Pan Salmon and Asparagus
Snack	Banana Pancakes
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

WEEK TWO

SHOPPING LIST - Week Two

Veggies

5 cloves garlic
1 bunch asparagus
1 bag spinach
3 avocados
1 cucumber
1 head cauliflower
1 red onion
1 small bunch kale
2 large sweet potatoes
2 green bell peppers
2 zucchini

Meat / Seafood

1 Rotisserie chicken
2 pounds beef top sirloin
4 salmon filet

Fresh Fruit

1 lemon

Pantry Items

1 can chickpeas
1 can black beans
1 can diced tomatoes with garlic
1 can corn
Instant Brown rice
1 cup canned salsa
1 qt chicken broth
olive oil

Spices

Taco seasoning
Ground turmeric
Garlic Powder
Curry Powder
Ground Cumin
Salt
Pepper

Other

1/4 cup non-dairy creamer
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
and Monterey jack blend

WEEK TWO

DINNER RECIPES

Sweet Potato Bowl



One sweet potato provides 377% of your daily Vitamin A needs, plus 4 grams of fiber to keep you full longer. This bowl also provides ample amounts of B vitamins (which give you energy!), vitamin A, vitamin C, and more!

INGREDIENTS

2 TBSP OLIVE OR COCONUT OIL
1/2 RED ONION, SLICED
2 LARGE SWEET POTATOES, HALVED
1 BUNDLE BROCCOLI, BROCCOLINI, CHOPPED
2 BIG HANDFULS KALE, STEMS REMOVED
1 (15 OZ) CAN CHICKPEAS, DRAINED, RINSED AND PATTED DRY
1 TSP CUMIN
3/4 TSP GARLIC POWDER
1/4 TSP TURMERIC

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Preheat oven to 400 F. Arrange sweet potatoes (skin side down) and onions on baking sheet. Drizzle with oil.

STEP 2: Bake for 10 minutes, remove, flip sweet potatoes and add broccoli. Bake another 8-10 minutes.

STEP 3: Remove from oven, add kale, drizzle with oil, bake another 4-5 minutes. Set aside.

STEP 4: Heat large skillet over medium heat. While warming up, toss chick peas and seasonings in a mixing bowl.

STEP 5: Add 1 tsp oil to skillet, then add chickpeas and sauté until brown, approximately 10 minutes.

STEP 6: Divide roasted vegetables among 3 bowls (chopping them into smaller pieces if desired) and top with chickpeas.

Makes 4 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V This recipe is vegetarian as written.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 474, Fat 21g, Carbs 62g, Fiber 11g, Sugar 7g, Protein 13g.

WEEK TWO

Spicy Chicken and Spinach Soup



Easy to make and checks off all the nutrient boxes! You will find protein in the chicken, healthy carbs in the veggies and when topped with avocado you get a dose of healthy fats.

INGREDIENTS

4 CUPS CHICKEN BROTH
1 CUP SALSA
2-3 TBSP HOMEMADE TACO SEASONING
1 CAN CORN
1/2 BAG FRESH SPINACH
1 ROTISSERIE CHICKEN, PULLED
2 AVOCADO

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: In a large pot, boil broth and salsa. Add remaining ingredients (except avocado).

STEP 2: Simmer 10 minutes, serve. Top with 1/4 avocado. Makes 4 servings.

Makes 4 Servings.

You can prepare in a Slow Cooker by using a raw whole young chicken. After chicken is cooked discard the bones and use the chicken broth.



This recipe is gluten free as written.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 379, Fat 20g, Carbs 27g, Fiber 12g, Sugars 8g, Protein 35g.

WEEK TWO

Beef Kabobs with Avocado Sauce + Turmeric Cauliflower



This meal offers a lean source of protein in the beef and the avocado is filled with good fats.

INGREDIENTS

1 LBS BEEF TOP SIRLOIN (CUT INTO 1-IN CUBES) COOKED IN 1 TB OLIVE OIL
1 CLOVE MINCED GARLIC
SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE
1 MEDIUM AVOCADO, SLICED
1/2 CUP CUCUMBER, CHOPPED
1/4 CUP DAIRY FREE CREAMER (TO BE USED AS THICKENING AGENT SO CAN BE OMITTED)

1 HEAD CAULIFLOWER, FLORETS ONLY
1 TBSP OLIVE OIL
1/2 TSP TURMERIC POWDER
1 TSP GARLIC POWDER
1/2 TSP CURRY POWDER

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Prepare the cauliflower first by tossing the florets in olive oil.

STEP 2: Sprinkle with spices, there's no measurement because it's based on your palate. The first time you use turmeric, maybe start with less than you think and increase it as you enjoy more often.

STEP 3: Spread on a baking sheet and roast in oven for 35 minutes at 350.

STEP 4: Cook steak on stove top to your preferred temperature.

STEP 5: Puree avocado, cucumber and creamer. Serve steak with avocado sauce.

Makes 4 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V Skip the steak and just enjoy a double portion of the turmeric cauliflower with the avocado sauce.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 297; Carbs 3.5g; Fiber 2.1g; Sugars 0g; Fat 15.1g; Protein 35.4g

WEEK TWO

Zucchini, Black Bean & Rice Skillet



Combining beans and rice creates a complete protein without the need for a traditional meat. Add the veggies and you have a nutrient packed dish filled with fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

INGREDIENTS

1 TBSP OLIVE OIL
1 1/2 CUPS ZUCCHINI, QUARTERED LENGTHWISE
1 1/2 CUPS GREEN PEPPER, DICED
1 CAN (15 OZ) BLACK BEANS, RINSED, DRAINED
1 CAN (14.5 OZ) DICED TOMATOES WITH GARLIC, UNDRAINED
3/4 CUP WATER
1 CUP INSTANT BROWN RICE
2 TSP CUMIN
1 TSP CHILI POWDER
1/2 CUPS SHREDDED CHEDDAR AND MONTEREY JACK CHEESE BLEND

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Heat oil in deep skillet over medium heat. Add zucchini and bell pepper – cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

STEP 2: Add beans, undrained tomatoes and water. Increase heat and bring to a boil. Add rice, cumin and chili powder; stir well. Cover; remove from heat and let stand 7 minutes until liquid is absorbed.

STEP 3: Sprinkle with cheese.

Makes 6 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V This recipe is vegetarian as written.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 227, Fat 5g, Protein 10g, Fiber 5g, Sugar 4g, Carbs 37g.

WEEK TWO

One Pan Salmon and Asparagus



Nothing beats fresh salmon, lemon juice, herbs, and green asparagus. Packed with nutrients, protein, and healthy fats, this is one of the Queen of simple, one pan meals!

INGREDIENTS

2 TBSP OLIVE OIL
4 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
4 TBSP LEMON JUICE
2 TBSP FRESH THYME
4 SALMON FILETS (Wild Alaskan Caught or Farm Raised)
1 BUNCH OF ASPARAGUS

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Preheat oven to 400 F. In a small bowl, mix: dash of salt & pepper, 1 Tbsp thyme, 2 Tbsp minced garlic, 2 Tbsp olive oil, and 2 Tbsp lemon juice.

STEP 2: Cover large baking pan with foil and place salmon on pan. Spoon above mix on top of salmon.

STEP 3: Place asparagus on baking pan. Cover with remaining ingredients. Bake 10-12 minutes, until salmon flakes easy.

Makes 4 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V Use tofu sliced rather than salmon fillets.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 376, Total Fat 14g, Carbs 2g, Fiber 2g, Sugar 3g, Protein 35g.

WEEK THREE

WEEK THREE EDUCATION

Let's take a quick look at GMOs, where they live, what's the risk, and what to consider when you're eating away from home. Eating on the run is a part of life, we have tips to help you do it in a healthier way!

GMO is not the obscure word and concept it was a decade ago. You may see headlines of products or restaurants offering non-GMO options. You may hear concerns of the health impact too many GMOs may have on the body. Or you may hear nothing, but have a general sense that GMOs are not necessarily a good thing. Well, let's take a quick look at GMOs, where they live, what's the risk, and what to consider when you're eating away from home.

What Are GMOs?

Great question! GMO stands for genetically modified organism. This means, during the food production of an item all, or a portion, of a food's genome is changed to create a new trait in that food. This is typically done at the crop level and then is carried with the food throughout the production process, whether that food stands alone or is used to make another food. There are also genetically engineered foods (again, happening at the crop/seed level) where scientists change the genetic code of a food (calling on high school science! think DNA, RNA, proteins). Often these terms are used interchangeably, but do not mean the same thing. For our purposes, in this article, we are going to focus on GMOs.

Why go through all this work to change the foods we eat? On macro level... mass food production. Creating more food for more people in larger amounts. Many times the modifications come as an effort to protect crops and increase their yields. For example, in 2016 the National Academies of Science created a list of the top genetically engineered seeds (that DNA gig), and found that the top crop was maize. Corn, that's right. So scientists took the corn seed, changed its genetics to make the crop insect resistant and herbicide resistant.

It's worth noting that writing an article on GMOs can sometimes seem like an opinion piece. As with many nutrition and food production topics, the science is still unfolding and it also depends on what is important to your family and your health. Not all GMO changes could be considered bad, with some attempting to make foods healthier. For example, some companies are experimenting with meats to be genetically modified to offer more omega-3 fatty acids. There are also organizations such as the World Health Organization which maintain a set of science-based standards, guidelines, and practices to create safe GMOs and GEs.

But Should I Give Them to My Kids (and myself)?

While the FDA and other groups have deemed these GMOs and GEs safe to eat, there's a growing public concern that a diet high in these can be harmful to your health leading many countries to place restrictions on the practice or implement strict labelling laws. As an overall approach to healthy, it is good practice to eat as many whole, nutrient-rich foods as possible. The less processed a food is, the more likely it will not have GMOs. Most items that are non-GMO will be labelled as such, additionally, if an item is USDA Organic it is also non-GMO.

Limiting GMOs in your diet can take some work, especially if you are eating out on the reg.

Why the Concern with Fast Food?

The main reason is because the crops that top the GMO list are also widely used in the fast food (and really, the entire restaurant industry). When you are trying to serve up tasty food to the masses you look for the

WEEK THREE

cheapest, most sustainable foods. This means corn, soybean, canola, potatoes, and more. Pair that with meats that are treated with antibiotics (leading some to be concerned that the human body is being over-exposed to antibiotics, which may cause antibiotic resistance further down the road) and there's reason to pause before grabbing that next value meal.

Eating on the Run

You're a busy mom, and cooking a meal from whole ingredients just isn't happening every day. AND THAT'S TOTALLY OKAY! There are going to be days where you have to grab-n-go and it's not going to be the healthiest thing. If this is something that happens rarely then do your thing and don't worry. Put more effort into the foods you are making at home, pack healthy snacks, and ensure those are meeting your nutritional needs. However, if you find yourself in the drive thru lane a little more often then it's time to give more thought to your food.

In many cities, there are local restaurant options that may offer non-GMO options, so scout out the menus around you and often they will boast non-GMO on their signage or website. There are only two national restaurant chains, Panera and Chipotle, who offer non-GMO foods and will label items that do contain GMOs. Chick-fil-a is also committed to serving chicken not treated with antibiotics in 2019 (at last report about 20% of their chicken was antibiotic-free).

If you are looking for snacks to pack, many items are labelled non-GMO on the front of the package. It is important to recognize that just because an item is non-GMO does not mean it's healthy, it can still contain high amounts of sugar or calories so consider how it fits into your diet as a whole.

WEEK THREE

Omega 6's: it's important

As our diets have changed and the focus became quick fast food, cheap, shelf-stable foods scientists started noticing a trend. People were becoming sicker – but why? There are many compounding reasons but one thing that has presented itself in the research is the impact of two fatty acids – commonly called Omega-3s and Omega-6s. These essential fatty acids are not made in the body, so need to be in our food. However, when consumed they are the precursors to a whole metabolic process that is impacting the body. Without diving into the difficult to pronounce names and mechanisms used to convert these acids in the body, we know that omega-3 fatty acids are converted to anti-inflammatory acids, while omega-6s are turned into pro-inflammatory acids. [\(1\)](#)

Why Does This Matter?

Well, we've been talking a lot about inflammation in this series, and you now know that inflammation can be the root of many serious diseases including cardiovascular disease, obesity, and some cancers.⁽³⁾ What is even more interesting with these two fatty acids is when omega-3s and omega-6s are imbalanced we also see an increase in nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, irritable bowel disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease. [\(2\)](#)

It is also worth noting that when omega-6s are over-consumed and omega-3s under-consumed there is an increased prevalence of depression and other mental health issues. Furthermore, we know that this imbalance can lead to more obesity and even changes in adipose tissue (fat) in the body, particularly around the brain-gut-adipose tissue axis. [\(1\)](#) Sounds very dooms-day huh? While it is something to give pause to, the good news is that there are ways you can help change your ratio.

You Keep Mentioning "Ratio" – More Details Please

It is believed that the ideal omega-6 to omega-3 ratio is 4:1 – currently, the average American's ratio is 16:1 or 20:1. Way out of whack! This has happened because of the increased processing of foods in our market. For example, adding highly processed oil is a really cheap, fast way to produce foods that are tasty (fats make foods more palatable) and shelf stable, but they also tend to be the highest in omega-6s. The research is conflicted on the right amounts of omega-6s you should be getting (and truth be told, it is not an easy thing to track for most). However, what there is agreement on is that it's more about achieving the 4:1 ratio than hitting an exact numbers of grams (but there are recommendations out there). You can also talk to your doctor about measuring your ratio through a special lipid profile test, if you are concerned.

What's Next?

Even without the special medical tests, we can make the assumption that your omega-6 to omega-3 ratio needs some tweaking. Here are some ways you can keep your in check:

- Get more omega-3s: To offset the high amount of omega-6s in the diet, focus on adding more omega-3s throughout the week. Eat higher fat seafood (salmon gets two thumbs up here) twice a week and choose plant oils when cooking (olive oil, coconut oil, and palm oil).
- Eat more plants: A large amount of omega-6s come from processed foods and animal products. By increasing the amount of plants you eat you will not only decrease your intake of omega-6s but also boosts your overall nutrient intake.
- When you choose meat, choose wisely: Most meats have very low omega-3 amounts, however, grass fed meats tend to be a little higher than conventionally raised. The lowest ranking meats? Anything processed.
- Supplement (maybe): While we always believe food first, there are times when a supplement may be right

WEEK THREE

for you. To boost your omega-3s consider taking a fish oil or cod liver oil supplement. This can be a deep topic, but if you are up for some more reading you can find great information in week four.

Forget the Omega 6's, zoom in on the Omega 3's

The reason you hear less about those omega-6s (refers to a whole family of polyunsaturated fatty acids) is because they are so abundant in our food supply we don't need to try to get extra.

How do I eliminate omega 6's?

You can find omega-6s in poultry, eggs, nuts, cereals, wheat, whole-grain breads, and most oils. When you zoom out and start looking at all the foods out there, these omega-6s are found in so many foods that we don't have to make the extra effort to get enough. One of the biggest sources of omega-6s in an average diet comes from soybean oil, mainly because it is used in processed foods

Cut back on processed seed and vegetable oils such as soybean oil, cottonseed oil, sunflower oil instead consider using butter, coconut oil, plan oil, and olive oil (always with moderation and portion control in mind) This includes salad dressings. Most store-bought salad dressings contain large amounts of oils. Check out our homemade salad dressings!

Avoid Unhealthy Additions. When food companies make foods they are typically looking to create products that will last a while on the shelf at the lowest cost. When you make foods from scratch at home you are going to be avoiding some of the additives. For example, a typical additive used to help to emulsify (bind together) foods to increase shelf life is soy lecithin. Lecithins are naturally found in soybeans and egg yolks and can be beneficial to your heart and brain; however, when consumed in large quantities there are studies that have linked chronic inflammation, mineral deficiencies, and GI distress.

WEEK THREE

DAY 1

Breakfast	Avocado Toast
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Lean & Mean Chili
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

DAY 2

Breakfast	Banana Pancakes
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Slow Cooker Salsa Chicken
Snack	Basic Green Smoothie
Snack (optional)	Peanut Butter Balls

DAY 3

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Grandma's Beef Vegetable Soup
Snack	Peanut Butter Balls
Snack (optional)	Sweet Potato Waffle

WEEK THREE

DAY 4

Breakfast	Egg Bites
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Roasted Chickpea Gyros
Snack	Avocado Toast
Snack (optional)	Basic Green Smoothie

DAY 5

Breakfast	Brain Power Smoothie
Lunch	Leftovers from previous night's dinner or grab a lunch recipe from our recipe box .
Dinner	Easy Shrimp Skewers
Snack	Banana Pancakes
Snack (optional)	Veggies & Ranch Dip

WEEK THREE

SHOPPING LIST - Week Three

Veggies

8 whole mushrooms
1 green bell pepper
1 red bell pepper
3 medium yellow squash
1 tomato
6 cloves garlic
2 medium potatoes
3 carrots
2 onions
1 head cabbage
1 head large leaf lettuce

Meat / Seafood

1 pound Chuck roast
1 pound ground beef
3 Chicken breast, boneless, skinless
2 pounds shrimp, peeled, cleaned

Fresh Fruit

1 lemon

Pantry Items

4 pita flatbreads
1 can vegetable broth
Olive Oil
1 can Kidney beans
2 cans black beans
1 can salsa
1 can diced tomatoes with garlic
1 can wax beans
1 can chickpeas

Spices

Chili powder
Ground cumin
Ground paprika
Italian Seasoning
Cayenne pepper
Salt
Pepper

Other

1 cup Tzatziki sauce
1 cup tomato juice (V8 juice)
1 cup frozen corn

WEEK THREE

DINNER RECIPES

Roasted Chickpea Gyros



A quick dinner or lunch with tasty chickpeas and seasonings. Chickpeas are a great vegetarian option because they have some protein while also boasting fiber in their nutrient profile.

INGREDIENTS

1-15 OZ CAN CHICKPEAS, RINSED AND DRAINED
1 TBSP OLIVE OIL
1 TBSP PAPRIKA (OPTIONAL)
1 TSP GROUND BLACK PEPPER
1/2 TSP CAYENNE PEPPER
1/4 TSP SALT
4 PITA FLATBREADS
1 CUP PRE-MADE TZATZIKI
1/4 RED ONION CUT INTO STRIPS
2 LETTUCE LEAVES ROUGHLY CHOPPED
1 TOMATO SLICED

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Pat dry chickpeas with paper towel, removing any skins that may come off.

STEP 2: Gently toss chickpeas with oil, paprika, black pepper, cayenne pepper, and salt.

STEP 3: Spread chickpeas onto a greased rimmed baking sheet and roast at 400 degrees F (200 C) for about 20 minutes, until lightly browned but not hard.

STEP 4: Spread some tzatziki onto one side of the pita, then sprinkle in 1/4 of the chickpeas and add veggies. Fold & enjoy!

Makes 2 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V This recipe is vegetarian as written.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 331, Total Fat 12g, Carbs 45g, Protein 11g, Fiber 7.5g.

WEEK THREE

Lean and Mean Chili With Beans



This recipe is packed with nutrients, and sure to keep you satiated. In place of tomato juice, try Spicy Organic Very Veggies juice.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 LB. GROUND BEEF
- 1 CAN KIDNEY BEANS, RINSED
- 1 CAN BLACK BEANS, RINSED
- 1 CAN DICED TOMATOES
- 1/2 ONION, DICED
- 1 RED PEPPER, DICED
- 3 CLOVES GARLIC, MINCED
- 1 CUP VEGETABLE BROTH
- 1 CUP TOMATO JUICE SIMILAR TO V8 JUICE
- 1 TBSP OLIVE OIL
- 2 TBSP CHILI POWDER
- 1/2 TSP CUMIN
- 1 TSP PAPRIKA

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: In deep skillet add olive oil, garlic, red peppers and onion. Cook until onions are translucent. Remove from skillet, set aside.

STEP 2: Cook ground beef in skillet

STEP 3: Add chili powder and mix with ground beef. Add remaining ingredients, including the onion mix. Simmer covered for 30 minutes.

Makes 4 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written. Check all canned goods are Gluten Free.

V Eliminate ground beef.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 228, Fat 6g, Carbs 21g, Fiber 7g, Sugars 4g, Protein 24g

WEEK THREE

Slow Cooker Salsa Chili



Super easy and packed with protein. With just 4 ingredients you also get extra lycopene (strong antioxidant) from the salsa and fiber from the black beans. I prefer organic corn because 85% of corn in the U.S. is genetically modified.

INGREDIENTS

3 BONELESS, SKINLESS CHICKEN BREASTS, HALVED (roughly 4 oz each after halving)
1 CAN RINSED BLACK BEANS
1 CAN CHUNKY SALSA
1 CUP FROZEN CORN

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Place all ingredients in a slow cooker.

STEP 2: Cook and cover until done, stirring occasionally. If salsa sticks to the side of cooker, simply add a little water.

Makes 6 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V Substitute chicken with additional 1 cup lentils or beans.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 198, Fat 2g, Protein 29g, Carbs 16g, Fiber 0g, Sugar 2g

Nutrition per Serving VEGETARIAN: Calories 112, Fat 2g, Protein 12g, Carbs 23g, Fiber 0g, Sugar 2g

WEEK THREE

Grandma's Beef Vegetable Soup



Who doesn't like recipes from Grandma? Another favorite for the slow cooker or crockpot, full of hearty ingredients. Bok choy has protein, fiber and tons of vitamins and minerals!

INGREDIENTS

1 lb. BONELESS CHUCK ROAST, CUBED
1 SMALL HEAD of CABBAGE or BOK CHOY
1 MEDIUM YELLOW ONION, DICED
3 WHOLE CARROTS, DICED
2 MEDIUM POTATOES, DICED
1 CAN WAX BEANS (optional)
SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

DIRECTIONS SLOW COOKER

STEP 1: Place all ingredients in a slow cooker or crockpot, cover with water.

STEP 2: Cook on low for 6 hours.

DIRECTIONS STOVE TOP

STEP 1: Place chuck roast in large pot, cover with water. Cook on med-high for 4 hours, covered.

STEP 2: Skim fat off top of water. Add remaining ingredients and cook for 1 more hour.

Makes 4 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V Skip the beef roast and add lentils, extra beans and extra veggies.

Nutrition per Serving: Calories 387, Fat 20g, Carbs 25g, Fiber 6g, Sugars 7g, Protein 27g

WEEK THREE

Shrimp Skewers & Veggies



INGREDIENTS

2 POUNDS LARGE SHRIMP, PEELED AND DEVEINED
8 TBSP BUTTER
ZEST AND JUICE OF 1 LEMON
3 TSP MINCED GARLIC
3 TSP ITALIAN SEASONING
3 MEDIUM YELLOW SQUASH, CUBED
8 CHERRY TOMATOES
1 MEDIUM GREEN PEPPER, CUT INTO CHUNKS
8 MEDIUM FRESH MUSHROOMS

DIRECTIONS

STEP 1: Preheat grill to medium-high heat, skewer shrimp (about 5 per skewer). On separate skewers, thread veggies.

STEP 2: Add butter to small pan and melt. Add, lemon zest, lemon juice, and garlic; heat for 1 minute.

STEP 3: Brush shrimp and veggies with butter sauce and sprinkle with Italian seasoning. Grill 5-8 minutes until cooked.

STEP 4: Top with remaining butter sauce; Serve.

Makes 4-6 Servings.

GF This recipe is gluten free as written.

V Use firm tofu in place of shrimp.

Nutrition per Serving: Varies.

WEEK FOUR

WEEK FOUR EDUCATION

As you move into weeks four through six, continue to nourish your body with good, wholesome recipes. It's your turn to take the driving wheel with meal time recipes. Of course, you can use our [Recipe Box](#) for more ideas! If you are looking to add micro-boosts to your diet, MCTs, chia seeds, and collagen can be a great place to start. Add these things while keeping the focus of your lifestyle on whole foods and moving your body for best results. Read more below!

Are Supplements Necessary?

We all need a boost sometimes. Whether it's that emotional boost you get when your kid hugs you after a hard day. That physical boost you get when you've been doing a workout and realize you're making progress. Or the nutritional boost you get by adding certain foods to your diet. It is the later in this list that we are going to tackle here – supplements.

Wait a minute...

No need to come in skeptical or hide your wallet. Supplements can get a bad rap because of all the advertisements and false claims being made in the media. Yes, there are some great supplements... and some you should steer clear of. However, for our purposes we are talking real, whole foods, as supplements to either boost your nutrition or fill in the gaps. These are all foods that can be purchased at your grocery store, fit into your current eating habits, and are backed by clinical studies.

Up first: MCT Oil

This is the true superstar of the coconut oil revolution. You may remember when you started seeing coconut oil touted for its health benefits and weight management success stories. When we dive into those studies it was this Medium Chain Triglyceride that was to congratulate.

A little background. Triglycerides are another way of saying fatty acids, and there are many types of triglycerides out there. We classify them based on the number of carbon atoms, so we have short chain fatty acids (with less than 6 carbons), medium chain fatty acids (with 6-12 carbons), long chain fatty acids (13-21 carbons), and very long chain fatty acids (carbons in excess of 22). In our food supply, long chain fatty acids are the most common because they encompass polyunsaturated fats, saturated fats, and omega-3 fatty acids.

In clinical studies it was noted that individuals who consumed medium chain triglycerides saw moderate reductions in weight and improvements in their body composition (decreased waist circumference, decreased hip circumference, and decreased body fat percentages). This all happened with no change – or some studies showed a slight improvement – in the patient's blood lipid profile. When you dig into the why, we find that MCTs are broken down quickly in the body, giving a quick energy boost while also being able to convert to ketones which are a great source of fuel for the brain. In subsequent studies more benefits were found:

- Increased fullness: MCTs increased the hormones that decrease your appetite and make you feel full longer
- Not stored as fat: because they are broken down quickly, metabolized, and not stored as adipose tissue
- Improve lipid profile: May help decrease cholesterol, decrease LDL levels, and increase HDL levels in some
- Improve brain health: there are early indications that MCTs can help improve brain function as we age

We can find MCTs in several whole foods. Coconut oil is 60% MCTs, palm kernel oil is about 50% MCTs, and using an MCT oil supplement will give you 100% MCTs. When it comes to how much you need, that is still up

WEEK FOUR

for debate. In a meta-analysis of MCT studies, participants saw benefits when they used anywhere from 5-70 grams of MCT daily. So, add some MCT oil to your coffee or smoothie in the morning; cook up those veggies with some palm kernel oil; or add some coconut oil to your baking. Just remember, even for it's benefits you are still adding a fat to your diet so monitor how much you add and don't replace those omega-3s and other good fats. Just think of using MCTs in addition to those fats.

Chia Seeds

As a kid we couldn't get away from the "chi-chi-chi pets" and I know it was on my Christmas list! Now we are looking at those chi-chi-chia seeds for a whole other reason. Chia seeds are considered a functional food, meaning they offer benefits beyond their nutritional value. These little seeds are known to help decrease cholesterol, improve gut health, reduce your appetite, help maintain a healthy weight, decrease triglyceride levels, and improve your blood sugar levels (especially for those with Type 2 Diabetes). The reason these are so powerful is found when we zoom in on its nutrition facts.

In just 2 tablespoons of chia seeds we find:

- 7 grams polyunsaturated fats – 60% of those grams are in the form of omega-3s
- 11 grams of fiber – helping keep you full longer and positively impacting your triglyceride levels
- 4 grams of protein – and it is considered a complete protein because it offers all nine amino acids (important if you are trying to eat more plant-based)
- 18% of your daily value of calcium

Extra good news: you can eat it anyway it comes. Chia seeds have a soft shell so you can enjoy whole or ground – as opposed to flaxseeds which have a hard-outer shell so are more bioavailable when they are ground or in oil form. So, sprinkle on your cereal, add to baking or other dishes, and enjoy some chia pudding!

Collagen

This supplement is widely popular and often endorsed for promoting great skin and hair. There are many studies that back up this idea but the biochemistry behind it is more complex. Collagen is the main component of various connective tissues in the body from your skin and hair, to your joints and cartilage. Your body naturally produces collagen every day, however, over time that production slows down. To help boost collagen production a form of hydrolyzed collagen aka: collagen peptides can help (whole collagen cannot be absorbed by the body).

When we look at the mechanism by which this happens, we know that once the supplement is ingested it is broken down into amino acids. These specific amino acids serve as the building blocks to production of new collagen in the body while also acting as antioxidants helping to protect existing collagen from oxidative stress that would break it down. If you hit the store today you can find some solid sources of collagen on the shelves including bone broth, fish, egg whites, and spirulina. If you want something that you can stir into a power smoothie or add to your baking, you will also find collagen supplements. Current research does not show one type of collagen supplement to be superior to another, but we do know that bovine derived collagen (collagen types I and III) is linked to improving skin and hair while chicken derived collagen (type II) is seen to help cartilage and joint health.

Like all supplements and boosts, you can't neglect the rest of your diet and lifestyle. For example, for collagen peptides to do their thing in your body you need Vitamin C (think citrus fruits, peppers, strawberries, and

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tomatoes). Also, no amount of collagen supplement in your smoothie will be able to undo the oxidative damage done to the skin by sun exposure, smoking, and high sugar intake.

Macros: Are carbohydrates bad?

When I think carbohydrates, I default to bread, rice, pizza, pasta, etc. I don't always think yogurt, grapes, green beans, strawberries, etc. So let's get straight to the point on this one – not all carbs are bad! Carbs are one of the main macronutrients needed by your body, but are also the ones that bring up the most debate. One of the reasons controversy and confusion surround carbs is because the category is so broad. You will find sugar, starches, and fiber all in one family. Your body needs carbohydrates. Without them your brain, muscles, and body systems would struggle to function.

This does not mean to fill up on sugary, processed foods. Successful integration of carbohydrates into a healthy lifestyle must center on whole carbs. This means carbs found in their most natural and unrefined form. Not only do these foods fit into a healthy lifestyle, but they are overflowing with other nutrients such as fiber, antioxidants, phytochemicals, and vitamins.

Carbohydrates are the body's preferred source of fuel, craved by the brain and muscles to supply energy. It is true that restricting carbohydrates can lead to weight loss, but it is not a long-term solution and can cause serious damage to the body. Many studies have proven that a long-term, low-carbohydrate diet shows no weight loss benefit after 3-6 months.

Carbs: Be Balanced

Your best bets for whole carbohydrates are found in fruits and vegetables. Consuming at least 8 servings of these nutritious gems provides the vitamins and minerals your body needs to function at its best. But you don't have to stuff yourself with foods you aren't too fond of, whole grains can also help you reach your goal. Look for a carb that is high in fiber and low in sugar. These carbs tend to be minimally processed, whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans.

Other Foods to Consider

Dairy products such as almond milk, rice milk, Greek yogurt, and cottage cheese provide a healthy dose of carbs while also packing a powerful protein punch. Some of these foods can be high in added sugar so it's best to choose unsweetened versions. For example, 6 ounces of flavored Greek yogurt contains 28g of sugar whereas plain Greek yogurt contains only 14 grams. If you feel plain Greek yogurt is too bitter, add berries or a small amount of coconut sugar to the snack and stir. This way you get a touch of sweet while also being in control of the amount of sweetener added. "Superfoods" such as goji, cacao, chia, and flax are also a great source of carbs and can be added to many foods for a little boost.

Foods to Avoid

Many processed carbs should be avoided. These foods are refined flour, sugar and white rice. While the list is underwhelming, when you really start to look at foods and their labels, you will find a large percentage of packaged foods include at least one of these ingredients. For example, white bread, white pastas, candy, and soda top the list of foods to avoid. Some research studies have linked these foods to an increased amount of inflammation in the body (ie: fibromyalgia, asthma, allergies, and arthritis), type II diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. It is best to completely eliminate these foods and focus on incorporating the whole carbs addressed above.

WEEK FOUR

Macros

To have a completely balanced diet you want to incorporate the right number of carbs, protein, and fat for YOUR body. Getting too much of one or restricting another can lead to longer-term health consequences. One of the most common pitfalls I see with my clients is the over-restriction of carbs and high intake of protein. Macronutrients refer to carbs, fats, and protein – the three basic components of every diet.

Balanced Carbs: As I've fully covered above. Whole grains + produce = GOOD. Sugary, processed, carbs = NO GOOD

Balanced Protein: Don't become protein obsessed! The typical American diet is more than adequate when it comes to protein. Instead of focusing on getting more and more and more protein, focus on high quality proteins.

Balanced Fats: Good fats are your friends! For years it was thought that fats make you fat but we have since learned that good fats (omega-3s, unsaturated fats, etc) help the body function optimally and we need them in our lives! Avoiding saturated fats from fried, highly processed foods is a good thing. Passing on the avocado, olive oil, and walnuts is not such a good thing.

While exact percentages can vary, daily macronutrient percentages are found in the following ranges:

- *Carbohydrates: 45-60%
- Protein: 10-35%
- Fats: 20-35%

***A note from the R.D. about macros:** Figuring your calorie and macro levels can help get you started to a healthier lifestyle. As with much nutritional advice, I have often found that when I calculate a client's initial numbers, we may have to go back and tweak things after 1-2 weeks if there's been no progress. This can seem confusing and frustrating, but while these calculations are very well-researched, they are still averages and your body may just need a few more grams of fat and less carbs than the "average". Therefore, it's good to know where your information is coming from and to also work with a healthcare professional to make sure you are getting the foods that are right for you.

When I am creating a meal plan for the general population I break it down to around 40-50% carbohydrates, including all the "good carbs" mentioned above. Plus 20-25% fat, and 25% protein. This may not be the perfect composition for you and your body, but I have found that most of my clients find success with this mix. My advice is finding what works for you, your family and what helps you become the healthiest you can be.

WEEK FIVE

WEEK FIVE EDUCATION

As you move into week five, continue to nourish your body with good, wholesome recipes. We recommend using some of our [Plant Based Recipes](#).

Plant Based Diet: is it for me?

Plants have never been so in style! You've seen the terms plant-forward, plant-based, vegan, vegetarian, flexitarian... all telling you to eat more plants. But why? Plants have always been there, but their popularity has ebbed and flowed. Scroll through the Netflix documentary list and you'll see, currently, we are in a peak and there are good reasons why. As we look at the rising cost of healthcare and increasing disease rates, many individuals and institutions are looking for ways to stop the unnerving trends. This leads to focusing on the foods we consume. While some choose to eat more plants because they are avoiding meat, others will increase their produce intake because of the benefits of plants. Here we are focusing on those benefits.

What is Plant-Based?

With all the terminology out there, it's important to know that while all plant-based diets want you to eat more greens (and yellows, purples, red, orange, and so on) there is a difference in the diets*.

Vegan: This is often seen as the most restrictive, focusing entirely on plants and allowing no meat, fish, dairy, or eggs in any capacity.

Vegetarian: The most "mainstream" meat-free way of eating. This diet is plant based but, depending on the specifics of the person, does allow for dairy and egg products.

Flexitarian: Introduced recently as a way for those who want to eat most vegetarian but also want to sometimes indulge in meat or fish.

Plant-forward: This way of eating emphasizes plant based foods, meat may be included but is not the main dish. **In this article I use plant-forward and plant-based interchangeably.

*It should be noted that the term "diet" here is to refer to the way of eating as a lifestyle and not a diet following in the short-term.

Why Plants?

Scientists have been very interested in plants because early research indicated that reducing the amount of meat you consume is directly correlated with longevity and decreasing your risk for heart disease, stroke, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and many cancers. While there's some question, when you look at the entire body of research, regarding the optimal plant-based diet – some studies excluded soybeans and nuts, some allowed egg whites and skim milk – what we do know is that more plants = better health.

In one Harvard study following 110,000 people for 14 years, those who consistently enjoyed eight servings of fruits of vegetables were 30% less likely to have a heart attack or stroke. We also know that vegans and vegetarians have lower BMIs with an average weight of 6-15 pounds less than meat eaters. This indicates that a plant-focused diet can aid in weight loss. There are other benefits to eating more fruits and vegetables, including improving the largest organ in your body, your skin. For example, lycopene, the powerful nutrient found in tomatoes, helps protect skin from sun damage. At the same time vitamin C, found in high amounts in sweet potatoes, helps stimulate collagen production thus smoothing out wrinkles in the skin. High5 to that! We know that food can have a powerful impact on the body, and several case studies have shown greater

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control of blood sugar (A1C specifically), blood pressure, and lipid profiles in patients who ate plant-based versus those who took traditional medications.

But Won't I Miss Out on Protein?

Ah! The most common concern! In a review of 87 studies not one study found individuals who ate plant based (vegan, vegetarian, or otherwise) to be protein deficient. At a molecular level, protein is a bunch of amino acids that helps the body function properly. In a balanced plant-based diet you will find enough amino acids available to prevent any negative health effects.

There are also worries about the lack of other important nutrients such as iron, Vitamin B12, and fatty acids. Good news: You'll only need one supplement! Iron and fatty acids (omega-6 and omega-3) are plentiful in the plant-forward diet if you are including beans, leafy greens, and healthy oils such as ground flaxseed, walnuts, and canola oil. The only area of concerns comes from vitamin B12 which is needed to help in the formation of blood and in cell division. It is often lacking in diets without meat so a quality supplement is recommended.

Overall, individuals who eat plant-based diets consume more magnesium, potassium, iron, thiamin, riboflavin, folate, and vitamins. Even if you aren't interested in cutting out meat completely, consider filling ½ of your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables – for your health today AND tomorrow! Start with our [Plant Based Beginner's Guide](#).

WEEK SIX

WEEK SIX EDUCATION

As we round out our 6 weeks of nourishing our bodies, let's talk about weight loss vs. weight maintenance.

Do Diets work?

The diet industry brings in millions of dollars each year so there's no wonder why everywhere you look there are new supplements, products, and resources being floated past your eyes. There are even US federal dietary guidelines, that have looked at how American's eat and offered guidelines to help improve our health. Some of these sources are more valid than others, however, in a new study presented at the American Society of Nutrition this month (June 2019) the idea of one-size-fits-all was discussed. In a study of 1,100 US and UK adults' scientists found that food impacts all bodies differently, even when comparing twins. This means when given the exact same meal, insulin levels, fat levels, and overall impact on that meal to the body showed wide variations. That's why, when you try the diet your friend did to shed all those pounds, you are left staring at the scale wondering where you went wrong.

So, Should I Toss Out That Nutrition Info?

Not necessarily, I'd file it under "still more data needed." The study mentioned above, hasn't been confirmed by subsequent research but does match with other available research that suggests certain macronutrient profiles work for one population subset, but are ineffective for another. The good news is that there are a few things most researchers can agree on:

- Eat more produce and fiber
- Enjoy more whole, unprocessed foods
- Move more
- Reduce calories naturally by reducing your intake of sugar and highly processed foods

Calories, grams of protein, carbs, and fat all have their place. This allows nutrition professionals to calculate your needs based on data collected over years. It offers a starting point. But it's just that, a place to begin. Once you have that point, you see how the body reacts to certain foods and then you tweak. Not all calories are seen by your body equally so there is a level of trial and error. You may need fewer carbs, while another may need to increase calories, and another should add more fats. Still use your meal plan, and if it doesn't work, don't feel discouraged. Just know you haven't found what works for YOUR body... yet.

So, It's a No on Dieting?

When we talk about dieting it typically refers to restricting foods in some capacity – that is a no. The YES is trying to find different combinations of foods that work for your body, help you maintain a healthy weight, make you feel good, and give you the energy to do the things you need to do. The other YES is taking a healthy, relaxed, balanced approach to food, for many reasons. When you approach foods as trying to do your best 80 percent of the time and the other 20% enjoying life, it allows you the ice cream treat with your kids, the drive-through when you just have to get to the next practice, and treating food as something that's NBD (no big deal) instead of letting it control your life.

There is also the impact your dieting has on your kids. We know that the impact of parent's modeling dieting behavior is more impactful on daughtersthan on sons. We also know that modeling dieting, encouragement to diet, and weight teasing leads to negative eating habits and in 58% of cases studies the child's BMI was higher when these were present. Even when not dieting, skipping meals, or actively restricting your diet

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studies show that a mother's negative comments about her own body or food was highly linked to her child's disordered eating behaviors.

This behavior can present in childhood, but can carry long past those early years. In one 15-year study, when an individual dieted frequently as a teen, dieting increased for both genders and high-frequency dieting and unhealthy weight control behaviors increased as well. According to the National Eating Disorders Association, yo-yo dieting (repetitive cycles of gaining and losing weight) can negatively impact your health with increased risk of heart disease and negative impacts on your metabolism.

Bottom Line

Approaching food in a balanced, healthy, open way you are more likely to see the results you want. Listening to your body and finding foods that make your body feel good, while focusing on whole, non-processed foods, you are more likely to find your sweet spot. Using meal plans to help you find the right fit for you, and to give you a starting point is best. If all these reasons aren't enough, think about the impact your "dieting" can have on your kids now and in their future.

Why do some diets work?

General Pros: There are some diets that have shown positive outcomes for certain clients. If you have a food allergy or sensitivity you may find relief with some of the options out there. For some, a short term, strict diet can help reset the mind, but there are less intense ways to get this same result. These less intense ways can also offer a lifestyle solution.

General Cons: Most diets are not sustainable over the long term. Most will deliver results in the short term because of their incredible restrictions, however, when the diet/challenge/cleanse is over the weight returns. This leads to yo-yo dieting and a lot of frustration. While most diets reset your system, you have to learn how to sustain some of the principles learned while on the diet, so the yo-yo does not occur.

General Bottom Line: Whole foods, reducing added sugars, and incorporating, as many fruits and veggies as you can is always a good move. Severely restricting caloric intake, having a long list of rules related to food, or cutting out an entire food group (ahem... carbs!) may make for some short term gains but is very likely to fail you in the long run (and leave you hangry).

All that being said, let's take a closer look at some of the popular trends we see in the diet world.

[Read Diets Decoded:](#) Whole30, Paleo & Ketogenic

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Weight Loss vs Weight Maintenance

Everyone's journey is different, we know this. But so many times we look at people online or in real life and think "If I can just do that thing they're doing, then I'd be where I want to be." The truth of the matter is that whether you are trying to lose weight, maintain your weight, have a healthy pregnancy, lose the baby weight, or just trying to have enough energy to get through the day with your littles, it all looks so different. However, one thing that is the same when it comes to creating a healthy lifestyle, is you must focus on the foods you are putting in your body.

Nutrition can be a gigantic thing to try to tackle. There are so many options! What works for one may not work for another and what worked for you two years ago, may not work for you now. There is also the matter of finding what works for you – maybe you used to be able to spend the time to create healthy meals from scratch but now you need more assemble-and-serve options. Whatever the case may be it can be a lot to take in. Today we are putting the specifics aside and looking at the broad strokes of weight loss and weight maintenance, and help you meet your needs to matter what path you're on.

Do I Need to Get on A Scale?

Truth be told, the number on the scale is not the most accurate way to measure health. There are variables that can cause weight fluctuations, but it is often how we measure weight loss and it is an accessible tool to most. While some of this article will focus on weight loss, I want you to broaden your scope of weight loss and improved health to include other measures:

- Clinical measurements like blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood glucose levels
- Non-scale "whoop-whoop's: These are those things like putting on a pair of jeans you haven't worn in months and finding they don't pinch as much and going "whoop-whoop!" in your closet.
- Energy levels and other side effects: Often when we fuel our bodies with the foods that are good, we feel good! More energy, less bloating, and improve mood.

Let's Talk Weight Loss

Ok, you're in the weight loss mode. Clinically this is measured as losing 10% or more of your current body weight (this may not be your goal, but this is how it's defined in the literature). In an analysis of 29 weight loss programs, researchers found that focusing on less processed foods, limiting the amount of added sugar in the diet, focusing in healthy snacks, and not skipping meals, led participants to the most success. This also included increasing their awareness of the foods they ate and their activity level – aka: self-monitoring. Additionally, weight loss that ranged from 0.5-2 pounds per week was the healthiest, most sustainable weight loss. While participants were prescribed a diet, the specifics of the nutrients varied so much that the take home message was to find what works for your body AND your lifestyle.

When we talk weight loss it should also be noted we aren't talking dieting or diet culture. We are talking about feeding your body wholesome, nutritious foods with the end goal of feeling better and healthier. It's not a short-term fix to hit a goal and then go back to the same unhealthy habits. Instead it's a complete shift in the way you think about food.

Of course, there are times where a calculated and prescribed diet is needed, but other times just finding that space to trust your body and eat these healthier foods is exactly what you need. When you do focus on the numbers there is not a one-size-fits-all but instead are based on your basal metabolic rate – BMR – which is basically how much energy your body uses at rest. This amount varies depending on your gender, age, and weight (current or goal). Once you get that base number how active you are is calculated into account and creates a baseline for your calorie needs.

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Beyond knowing how many calories you need, looking at where those calories come from is important. Macronutrients refer to carbs, fats, and protein – the three basic components of every diet. While exact percentages can vary, daily macronutrient percentages are found in the following ranges:

- Carbohydrates: 45-60%
- Protein: 10-35%
- Fats: 20-35%

Figuring your calorie and macro levels can help get you started to a healthier lifestyle. As with much nutritional advice, I have often found that when I calculate a client's initial numbers, we may have to go back and tweak things after 1-2 weeks if there's been no progress. This can seem confusing and frustrating, but while these calculations are very well-researched, they are still averages and your body may just need a few more grams of fat and less carbs than the "average". Therefore, it's good to know where your information is coming from and to also work with a healthcare professional to make sure you are getting the foods that are right for you.

A note from the R.D.: When I am creating a meal plan for the general population I break it down to around 40-50% carbohydrates, including all the "good carbs". Plus 20-25% fat, and 25% protein. This may not be the perfect composition for you and your body, but I have found that most of my clients find success with this mix. My advice is finding what works for you, your family and what helps you become the healthiest you can be.

Ok, I'm There, Now What? Weight Maintenance

To paraphrase another dietitian, weight loss and weight maintenance are like marriage. What got you to the altar may look different than what keeps you together for a lifetime. This is backed up by science (not the marriage part, the weight loss part), the American Journal of Preventative Medicine found that individuals who experience successful weight loss had to switch gears to be successful weight maintainers. In the same analysis of 29 weight loss programs, participants who maintained their weight for at least one year consumed high quality protein foods, had a consistent exercise program, rewarded themselves for sticking with it, and had regular reminders for why they wanted to maintain a healthy weight. This was the gear shift. What helped them lose weight in the beginning isn't exactly what helped them keep that weight off.

There are several reasons why this shift is necessary after losing weight. First, your nutritional needs change. It is estimated that for every kilogram of weight (2.2 pounds) decreases your calorie needs by about 20-30 calories a day. This also explains why many will find they lose weight for a while, then hit a plateau, your body has hit a point where it's needs have changed. It's also about changing your relationship with food. If you lose weight and want to keep it off it means you must completely change your relationship with food forever. This is the same for those who have found themselves slaves to strict diets, counting every macro, or exercising to excess.

Exercise

Consider how active you are because that can impact your caloric intake. You don't need to measure exactly how much you are burning ... look past your activity watches! Instead go on how hungry you feel during the day. If you notice that you are hungrier on days you work out then enjoy a balanced protein and carbohydrate snack 30-60 minutes post-workout (check out our post-workout [peanut butter balls](#) or [anti-inflammatory smoothie](#)).

When you listen to your body, feed it wholesome foods, and move in ways that feel good you are most likely to maintain a weight that is right for you.