



Basic Nutrition and Diet FAQs:

By Stu Yellin, WNBF Pro Bodybuilder and Nutrition Coach

As long as I eat “clean”, I should be able to reach my physique goals, and yet it doesn’t seem to be working. What am I doing wrong?

The idea of categorizing certain foods as either “clean or dirty”, or “good or bad” has probably done more to confuse people than any other piece of dietary advice. At the end of the day, your body doesn’t really care where you get your nutrients from. Any food that you ingest will ultimately be broken down and put to use as either proteins, carbohydrates, or fats regardless of its original form. Of course issues like preservatives and artificial additives can bring *health* concerns into play, but in terms of losing or gaining weight (either body fat or muscle), carbs from a Pop-Tart are just as usable by your body as carbs from a piece of whole wheat bread.

I like to tell people that their diet might consist of nothing but grilled chicken, egg whites, broccoli, and brown rice – all “clean” foods – and yet if they’re eating more of it than they actually need to support their lifestyle and current body mass, they will still put on fat... even though they’re “eating clean!”

There’s plenty more that can be addressed in terms of digestion rates, and different feelings of satiety as a result of food choices, but the simple notion that eating “clean” will have a better effect on your physique (and as a result, your health), for the most part, just isn’t true.



I keep hearing that I should be cutting out all carbohydrates from my diet if I want to lose fat. Is this the best approach?

This idea stems from an oversimplification of human physiology. When you ingest carbohydrates, your body releases a hormone (insulin) which leads to the storing of carbs broken down into sugar-form either as body fat or for use in your muscles. Carb-free diets try to function from the perspective that, if you eliminate the insulin spikes that occur when you ingest carbs, your body won’t be able to store unused nutrients as body fat. This doesn’t really work though. When you eat any type of food, your body will experience some amount of insulin release. There really isn’t any way to avoid this.

The real question of whether the body will use or store ingested carbohydrates in your muscles or if it will create body fat from them is answered by how full your current glycogen (carbohydrate) stores already are. If your body is already ‘filled up’, then of course any extra ingested will get turned to fat.

However, if your storage levels are somewhat depleted from intense training, you can enjoy your carbohydrates and your body will be more than happy to make good use of them!

Another point to consider is that when you cut out all carbohydrates, your body will actually make its own! That's right, your body can take proteins (amino acids) and construct its own sugars. Sometimes your body may want some carbs when you're not giving it any, so it will have no choice but to turn to your existing muscle tissue (which is made up of proteins) to get raw materials to make its own. This is why any athlete with a basic understanding of nutrition will *never* completely cut carbs out of their diets. Trying to train intensely without fueling your body properly could lead straight to muscle loss and a lowered metabolic rate!

Eating a "low fat" or even no-fat diet is a great way to lose weight, because "eat fat, get fat", right?

Sadly this outdated premise ignores a whole list of other factors to consider if you want to improve your physique, and health. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) incorrectly advised this approach based *solely* on the fact that a single gram of fat will yield more than twice as much usable energy for your body as a single gram of either protein or carbohydrates – Fat having 9 calories per gram, while protein and carbs each have 4 calories per gram. Obviously eating less total calories *should* lead to weight loss, right? Well... no. That's ignores the fact that the human body treats different macronutrients differently.



Eliminating fats from your diet can lead to a wide variety of negative health issues because body fat and dietary fat are two different things! While we may not want a lot of the former, we absolutely need the later.

Not only does your body require dietary fats to create and support various hormones and daily metabolic activities, but eating certain fats can slow the digestion of other foods in a meal, leading to more stable blood sugar levels and greater feelings of fullness between meals.

And lest any armchair expert try to tell you that an even-quicker way to weight loss is to eliminate fats *and* carbohydrates, let me assure you, that's quite possibly the least effective and most dangerous dietary advice you can follow!

Stu Yellin is a WNBF Professional Bodybuilder, nutrition coach, and contest prep coach. He has helped people from all walks of life, including Professional Athletes, competitive bodybuilders and figure contestants get into the best shape of their lives. For more information or to contact, go to www.StuYellin.com.

