

V3 Bodybuilding

Success Guide



Use of V3 Bodybuilding

Before commencing any diet or exercise program please check with your doctor or medical practitioner. I, Chris Willitts, am not a doctor and don't pretend to be one. I'm not qualified as any kind of licensed professional to provide medical or nutritional advice. I'm an inspired casual bodybuilder who trains hard and eats plants.

All information in this guide and on VegetarianBodybuilding.com is published for educational and entertainment purposes only. The opinions and thoughts expressed here are never to be considered professional advice, or a substitute for professional advice.

To the maximum extent permitted by law, I make no representation or warranty, either express or implied as to the benefits or detriments of the opinions and lifestyle being expressed in this guide or on this website. I accept no responsibility or liability for any problems you may incur as a result of you participating in the V3 program or this website. Your choices are solely your responsibility.

Table of Contents

WELCOME TO THE V3 BODYBUILDING TRIBE

PLANT-BASED NUTRITION

- Whole Food, Plant-Based Diets Build Muscle
- Vegetarians Are More Insulin Sensitive, Another Advantage
- Getting Enough Protein
- Be Mindful of Your Macros
- Meal Plan Templates
- Why Most New Vegetarians Go Back to Meat
- How to Stay Committed
- How to Handle Judgement and Social Situations
- Important Nutritional Tips

BODYBUILDING AND MIND-BODY FITNESS

- Lift Heavy Weights Using Compound Exercises
- Strength Skills That Compound Your Efforts
- Workout Schedule
- Why Bodybuilders Should Practice Meditation
- Yoga: The Perfect Balancing Apparatus for Bodybuilding

Welcome to the V3 Bodybuilding Tribe

Congratulations! Investing in your health is always a good decision. Through the vehicle of plant-based fitness, you've taken a great first step toward vibrant health and a better physique.

Eating plants has worked wonders in all aspects of my life: mood, energy, drive, sleep, meditation, and mental and physical strength. Now it's your turn to utilize the best vegetarian bodybuilding nutrition and lifestyle information that science has to offer. V3 is time-tested with people of all shapes and sizes, and distilled down into one complete system.

V3 isn't merely a fitness program, it is a timely way of life that can advance our collective health as a society and benefit the planet in critical ways. I am honored to help you on this journey, and thank you for participating in your health, our health, and the planet's health.

Here's to healthier bodybuilding,

Chris Willitts

Founder

VegetarianBodybuilding.com

PLANT-BASED NUTRITION

There's a lot of great information here, and after reading, be sure to return to the online resources located in the Members Area for downloadable sheets and action steps to take.

Redefine and Refine

Vegetarian bodybuilding is more than just eating plants and building muscle. It's a lifestyle choice that has a huge impact upon your energy levels, athletic performance, physical presence, inner strength, and general state of mind. Throughout the V3, my goal is to help you redefine bodybuilding and refine your diet and fitness plan.

Whole Food, Plant-Based Diets Build Muscle

Now more than ever, we are seeing health-conscious bodybuilders and athletes move towards a whole food, plant-based diet.

Professional bodybuilders like [Torre Washington](#), bikini competitors like [Samantha Shorkey](#), and professional athletes like David Carter (defensive lineman for the Oakland Raiders) are giving us a glimpse into the future of fitness.

"I watched a TV documentary about how animals are farmed, killed, and prepared for us to eat... I saw all those cows and pigs, and realized I couldn't be a part of it any more. It was horrible. I did some research to make sure I could still obtain enough protein to fight, and once satisfied that I could, I stopped. I'll never go back."

— David Hays (former heavyweight boxing champion)

Professional vegetarian athletes are kicking butt on the world's stage. We will probably start to see much more of this trend in the future. There is no question that a plant-based diet can build the muscle and strength required to excel physically.

To gain muscle mass (or lose fat), the meal plan for a vegetarian and a meat-eater are essentially the same in terms of nutrient and caloric intake. To build muscle, you will need to take in a caloric surplus (eating more calories than you burn metabolically and through exercise) from healthy whole food sources like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and beans/nuts, and get plenty of protein.

You will also need to create the demand for more muscle through intense weight training. Finally, you will need adequate rest to fully heal and recover (rest is when we technically get stronger).

Vegetarians Are More Insulin Sensitive

Vegetarians who pursue bodybuilding have more advantages than you may think, and being more insulin sensitive is one of them.

Much of the nutritional advice that you read about for gaining muscle mass and trying to look more aesthetically sculpted is based around a staple diet of meat and animal-based proteins. This is simply an outdated approach, and the role of the vegetarian diet for building muscle in a healthier manner can no longer be ignored.

To get "ripped" or "shredded," you need a percentage body fat between 6-8%, and it is common dialogue that an excellent physique is created mostly in the kitchen, rather than the gym.

For argument's sake, let's just say both are extremely important. McArdle, et al. (2010) reported that a staple healthy diet of low glycemic carbs, such as vegetables, nuts, and some fruits, supported an anabolic fat loss state and reduced percentage body fat and obesity related diseases within vegetarians.

This was supported by Kim (2012), who compared the impact of a long-term vegetarian diet to an omnivore diet. The results were quite encouraging in terms of health parameters for the vegetarian cohort, as there was a reduction in percentage body fat, oxidative stress*, blood cholesterol levels, and insulin resistance.

*[Oxidative stress](#) is the total burden placed on organisms by the constant production of free radicals in the normal course of metabolism, plus whatever other pressures the environment brings to bear (natural and artificial radiation, toxins in air, food and water, and miscellaneous sources of oxidizing activity, such as tobacco smoke).

These factors are hugely important to sustaining general health, staving off many chronic life-threatening illnesses, as well as building muscle.

Now the question is, why are these processes so important to the vegetarian bodybuilder's physique and overall health?

The Role of Insulin

One of the key hormones within the body for weight management and building muscle mass is insulin.

Insulin's main function is to reduce the amount of glucose circulating in the blood, and its levels are highest after consuming sugary snacks and/or foods with a high glycemic index. It is important to highlight that insulin is sensitive to the amount of both carbohydrate and protein consumed, but not fat.

This "mopping up" action of insulin inhibits muscle growth because it starves the muscle of glucose and redirects it to the liver to be stored as fat. As such, your cells need to be as insulin-sensitive as possible in order to increase the anabolic effect of food and training.

Too much insulin in the body increases percentage body fat. Wilmore & Costill (2010) reported that insulin resistance is actually increased when your percentage body fat and bodyweight are raised.

The impaired ability of glucose to enter muscle cells keeps the glycogen stores lower than normal, which increases the person's appetite and their motivation to eat more, thereby increasing fat stores and reducing lean muscle mass.

Kim (2012) stated that vegetarians have a lower* percentage body fat and insulin resistance than omnivores, backing up the statement by Wilmore & Costill. Eating low energy density vegetables, fruit, whole grains, legumes, and nuts—which are all major sources of nutrition within the vegetarian bodybuilder's diet—is a key factor in better control of blood sugars and insulin sensitivity.

*This is not to imply that all vegetarians have lower body fat percentages than all omnivores.

This improved blood sugar control has a positive connection with the fact that vegetarians have a lower incidence rate of type 2 diabetes and its associated complications when compared to omnivores.

A strict vegan diet has the added bonus of being cholesterol-free, low in saturated fat, and high in soluble fiber. This sets the stage to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers.

A plant-based diet that is rich in fats from nuts (e.g. almonds) is also high in unsaturated fats, which increase good cholesterol in the blood and reduce cardiovascular disease.

These "good fats" are essential for digestive processes, cell membrane structure and function, and satiety, and act as carriers of vitamins A and D. These vitamins essentially reduce oxidative stress and certain forms of cancer.

Omnivores tend to eat more saturated and trans-fatty acids, which are energy-rich at nine calories per gram; these bad fats are associated with heart disease because they raise the low density lipoproteins in the blood.

Some experts are now stating that high-protein diets are a big scam. I have read compelling research on both sides of the debate about how much protein we need.

I lean on the side of more protein is better if you are training hard.

We simply have different needs than the average person who doesn't participate in regular exercise. And if you're healthy, [high-protein diets are safe](#) for kidneys.

One interesting scenario that necessitates more research is how prisoners can get so muscular on a seemingly deficient diet. They survive on fairly small amounts of low-quality protein (and food).

One thing is clear, you need a calorie and protein surplus to build muscle.

A plant-based diet high in good fats (e.g. nuts, oils, and avocados) and proteins, with calorie cycling of starchy carbs, is an optimal formula to build muscle.

Final Notes About Insulin

The role of insulin in muscle growth is extremely important for muscle building. Insulin is important for promoting uptake of amino acids and enhancing synthesis of protein.

Vegetarians are more insulin-sensitive, which is an advantage in building muscle. We also have reduced associated chronic health risks and lower BMI, percentage body fat, oxidative stress, and blood cholesterol levels.

References

Kim, M.I., et al (2012). Long-term vegetarians have low oxidative stress, body fat, and cholesterol levels. *Nutr Res Pract* 6(2): 155-161.

McArdle, et al (2009). *Exercise Physiology: Nutrition, Energy, and Human Performance*. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Sharon A. Plowman, Denise L. Smith (2013). *Exercise Physiology for Health Fitness and Performance*. Wolters Kluwer Health.

Wilmore. J.H., Costill D.J. (2009). *Physiology of Sport and Exercise*. Human Kinetics. Champagne

Getting Enough Protein

How much protein do you need?

Women: 1 serving of protein (20-30g) with each meal*, every few hours.

Men: 2 servings protein (40-60g) with each meal*, every few hours.

*Or, if you eat less frequently, include more protein with each meal.

Weight training in combination with a high protein diet (33% of calories) is more effective for fat loss than just a high protein diet, or weight training with a diet lower in protein (20% of calories).

Obese and overweight diabetics on a high protein diet or a control diet for 16 weeks had the same kidney functioning capabilities. Added protein had no negative effects, even in folks who were at higher risk.

So enjoy your protein shakes!

Protein-Rich Vegetarian Food Is Actually Quite Plentiful

Creating a mass-building vegetarian meal plan is easier than you may think. People always ask me how I get my protein and then look at me funny when I tell them, "Food."

All plant-based whole foods contain protein, and therefore, if you eat enough throughout the day, you will get all the amino acids required to build a strong body.

Our entire system performs at a much higher level when we eliminate all the synthetic foods with preservatives and chemicals sold on shelves. Meat isn't inherently bad, but how it's produced today makes it unhealthy.

The idea is to consume more protein-dense whole foods like seeds, nuts, beans, and whole grains. They tend to be the most calorie-dense plant foods, and calories are a precious part of the equation when it comes to vegetarian bodybuilding.

Should I use protein supplements? Aren't they synthetic?

Many protein powders are mostly synthetic (made of chemicals in a lab, not whole foods), but some are not. There are a few quality plant-based protein powders that I recommend, which are derived from whole foods. The two brands that I personally use are Garden of Life and Sunwarrior.

Be Mindful of Your Macros

Indeed, there's more to bodybuilding nutrition than just counting calories and grams of protein. Mastering your macros is critical in bodybuilding, but what exactly are macros, and how do you calculate them?

"Macros" is short for macronutrient ratios, which break down into protein, carbohydrates, and fats. By calculating your macros, you decide what percentage of your caloric intake comes from protein, carbs, and fat. The most commonly recommended macronutrient ratio today is 40% protein, 40% carbs, and 20% fat.

However, it's a much better idea to calculate your individual macros based on age, weight, height, gender, and goal, rather than solely relying upon standard percentages.

[MyPlate](#) calorie tracker is a tool that does just that.

Macro Ratios: The Whole Picture

The optimal ratio of carbs/protein/fat should consider many variables person to person, here's a more complete list:

- age
- weight
- height
- gender
- fitness goal
- genetic/biochemistry disposition
- starting fitness level

Expanding on the Topic of Macros

Breakfast is perhaps the most important meal of the day to master your macros. To promote a lean, muscular body composition, I suggest taking in about 25-40 grams of complete proteins (e.g. quinoa, eggs, etc.) at breakfast, along with about 20-30 grams of low-glycemic carbohydrates and 15-20 grams of fats. These amounts should vary according to one's weight and goals.

How many calories do I need? Here's an example:

- Age: 35
- Sex: Male
- Height: 6'0"
- Weight: 210lb
- Activity: 5+ days per week
- Goal: Gain 2lbs of muscle per week

This person should consume 4,184 calories (via [MyPlate Calculator](#))

How much fat should I consume?

0.5 grams (or less) of fat per pound of bodyweight. For our 210lb vegetarian bodybuilder, this means 105g or a little lower is ideal (no lower than 75g or 80g).

Fat is essential for many of the body's functions, including hormone production. Again, the goal here is to target whole foods as your source. Fats from nuts, seeds, and especially avocados are ideal.

Carbohydrates

Nutrition experts agree that there are several factors that determine the quality of a carbohydrate source:

- Dietary fiber (the more, the better)
- Glycemic index (the lower, the better)
- Whole-grain content (the more, the better)
- Structure (the more solid, the better)

Although carbs are an essential part of every diet, not just a vegetarian diet, some carbs are better than others to keep in your menu rotation.

You'll notice I didn't go into great detail about carbohydrates. If you focus on protein, fat, and calories derived from a plant-based diet, the carbs will take care of themselves.

Meal Plan Templates

Please keep in mind that eating at certain times can increase the effectiveness of your nutritional intake ([read this article](#)).

Meal Plan Designed to Put on Muscle

Here's an example for a 210lb man who wants to weigh 220lbs:

Meal 1

- 16 oz. fresh raw juice (kale, spinach, parsley, cucumber, celery, ginger, green apple, and lemon)
- Protein shake with 2 servings of hemp, soy, or whey* protein, 1 cup almond milk, and 1 banana (*whey is vegetarian, but not vegan)

Meal 2

- 2 servings of tofu or egg scramble
- 2 cups oatmeal mixed with 2 tbsp. [pumpkin almond butter](#)

Meal 3

- 2 veggie burger patties on sourdough with 1/2 avocado sliced on top
- 1 large kale salad with mixed greens and tomato

Meal 4

- 2 cups oatmeal with cinnamon
- 1 apple with almond butter
- Protein shake with 2 servings of plant-based protein powder, 1 cup almond milk, and 1 banana

Meal 5

- 1/2 pack seitan
- 1/2 pound steamed broccoli
- Quinoa egg salad with lentils

Meal 6

- Protein shake with 2 servings of plant-based protein powder

Approximate totals for the day:

- 4,100-4,200 calories
- 220g protein
- 550-600g carbs
- 90g fat

Meal Plan Designed to Burn Fat

Here's an example for a 135lb woman who wants to weigh 125lbs:

Meal 1

- Low-carb protein shake with 1 serving of plant-based protein powder
- Fresh or cold pressed veggie juice
- 12 ounce Yerba Maté or green tea

Meal 2

- Bowl of quinoa porridge and with dried cranberries and slices of almonds

Meal 3

- Carrots and [mock tuna salad](#) (use the carrots as a utensil for scooping)
- Low-carb protein shake with 1 serving of plant-based protein powder
- Apple

Meal 4

- Kale salad with strips of tempeh and slices of avocado

Meal 5

- Spicy buffalo tofu with mixed veggies

Meal 6

- Low-carb protein shake with 1 serving of plant-based protein powder

Approximate totals for the day:

- 1,400-1,600 calories
- 120g protein
- 140g carbs
- 80g fat

The meal plan examples provided above should be considered general advice. When calculating your own needs, it requires specific attention to all the particulars of your situation.

That being said, start with:

1. The fundamentals of clean eating with high protein intake
2. Journaling your daily food intake meticulously
3. Allowing for at least 30 days of monitoring in order to gauge results
4. If you like the results, stay on that path

If you don't like the results, simply make 1-2 minor tweaks and continue to journal for another 30 days. Without pen to paper, it's too easy to have a misleading impression of what you're actually eating and what's actually working. Without giving it enough time to work, you can stop a good process short without even knowing it.

Journaling = Knowledge
"Applied" Knowledge = Power

Making Time for Meal Planning

To live a healthy lifestyle, you have to make time. Whether it's family, school, work, or hobbies, we all have our own diet and fitness excuses. But if you are truly passionate about your body and your health, I invite you to realize that you won't ever magically find time for fitness.

Here are a few vegetarian meal planning tips to try out:

- Make time on Sunday to plan out your meals for the week.
- Buy vegetarian staple foods in bulk whenever possible.
- Slice fruits and vegetables in advance to save time on prep work.
- Keep lots of salad and smoothie ingredients in the house for when you don't have time to cook.

Why Most New Vegetarians Go Back to Meat

The truth is, for as harmful as meat consumption can be (especially red meat), it's still the most convenient source of protein available to bodybuilders.

This is one of the primary reasons new vegetarians eat meat again. Most of us are insanely busy already, and if you add on top of that our training needs (grocery shopping, meal prep, gym time), convenience matters.

There are many misconceptions about this path of nutrition, so I wanted to get into some of the nuances behind why people decide to try a plant-based diet, and then go back to eating meat again. It should prove useful to those who are new vegetarians or thinking about trying it.

The HRC formed a coalition a few years ago to study why people go vegetarian or vegan.

According to HRC:

A small proportion of U.S. adults (1-3%) are "actual" vegetarians or vegans, although about twice that number describe themselves as vegetarian when asked (see the HRC primer, "[How Many Vegetarians Are There?](#)" for details).

Research on the motivations for both actual and self-described vegetarians (and vegans) finds that members of these groups select their diets based on multiple factors, usually including one primary motivator and one or more secondary motivators.

The most frequently cited factors are related to ethics and health. Vegans are more often motivated by ethics than any other reason. The most significant barriers to vegetarianism and veganism are concerns about preferred taste, nutritional deficiencies, and convenience.

Why do people become vegetarian?

Health, of course, is a major diet motivator. Research published in *Climate Change* found that reduced meat intake also reduces the number of dietary greenhouse gas emissions. A vegetarian diet additionally lowers risk for disease and boosts life expectancy, while red meat has an adverse effect on these aspects of health.

But in a majority of the former vegetarian cases, health is not the only motivator for going veg. Other reasons include:

- compassion for animals
- general disgust in animal products (e.g., mad cow disease)
- taste
- influence from significant other

Interestingly, former vegetarians told the HRC they disliked their diet for

"making them stick out in a crowd" and being unable to interact with other like-minded dieters and see the diet as part of their identity—not because of the food they were limited to.

84% of Vegetarians abandon their diet for animal products.

(Source: [Medical Daily](#))

How to Stay Committed

If you are truly committed, all you need is a little creativity for pursuing a whole food, plant-based diet. The "return on investment" is sky high, and it's easy to get used to after a couple weeks.

I knew that plants could build muscle, but I didn't believe that on faith alone, and I didn't quit eating meat all at once. I had to ease my way into it and slowly phase out meat (and almost all supplements). I finally started to feel comfortable once I observed that I was still making gains in the gym after starting the transition.

Keep It Simple

You'll find this guide rich in useful nutritional planning strategies. Trying to implement everything at once is a recipe for failure. So choose the single strategy that seems to fit your life best. And then give it a try.

Just remember that the goal of good nutrition is to help you:

- look better
- feel better
- perform better

Also remember that extreme diets and calorie counting are fast ways to make

temporary progress. They do have their place in preparing for a bodybuilding or fitness competition, but for the rest of us, they're not sustainable long-term. Look to habits instead; these three should help:

1. Slow down and stop when you're satisfied.
2. Eat veggies, protein, and healthy fats with every meal.
3. Eat carbs after every workout.

How Much Muscle Are You Building?

For obvious reasons, fat loss and muscle gain depends on the individual, but you should be seeing some progress every 2-4 weeks. If you're seeing the progress you want, continue with your current routine without changing it.

However, if you're seeing little or no progress in your strength or physique within four weeks, you'll need to adjust your fitness plan, either in terms of diet, rest, or training. Never adjust more than one dial/element at a time, so you can isolate what's not working. Use this chart to gauge your progress:

<u>Progress</u>	<u>Fat Loss</u>	<u>Muscle Gain</u>
Excellent	0.5-1% body fat every 2-4 weeks	1-2 lb. lean mass every 2-4 weeks
Average	0.5% body fat every 4 weeks	1 lb. lean mass every 4 weeks
Poor	Less than 0.5% body fat every 4 weeks	Less than 1 lb. lean mass every 4 weeks

How to Handle Judgment and Social Situations

People will generally ask why you're a vegetarian for two reasons:

1. They're curious about the lifestyle.
2. To pick a fight and "be right."

Try to determine which motive you're working with, if possible:

- Some inquiries are genuinely out of curiosity.
- Some people are insecure about their life choices, or simply hurting inside.

In all cases, it's important to remember that their energy about this topic has absolutely **nothing to do with you personally**. Many times, when people see someone else making a concerted effort to make positive changes in their life, it forces them to become aware of their own choices.

They can become defensive, because in that moment, they feel like it's a comparative attack. Although you're not outwardly saying anything negative, inwardly (to them) it can feel like you're saying: *"I'm better/healthier than you."*

My approach is simple...

Think up a short, light-hearted answer ahead of time.

I try to remember that whatever their motive is, it's not about me personally. I try to keep my energy light and humble, and tell them I'm a vegetarian because it offers me a positive "experience." I find that it's much harder to argue with someone's experience.

For instance, when asked the v-question, I may reply with something like this:

"Eating plants makes me feel more energetic throughout the day. I get more done, and my mood is generally more elevated. Even if it's psychosomatic, it works for me."

It's hard to argue with a statement like that. In fact, I beat them to the punch by essentially saying that even if I'm crazy and it's all in my head, I feel better and it makes me happy. I know some people will argue with the sun shining, but you get the idea here.

Important Tip: Notice that I'm not citing facts in my response. This allows the ones who are truly curious about becoming vegetarian to proceed in a productive dialogue about nutrition with you. Removing ego is key.

There's a difference between being of service and humbly offering information (when asked), and being the all-knowing vegetarian/vegan salesperson of the year.

Another example of keeping it light is when people ask: *"What can you eat?"* I might reply with *"Anything that grows out of the ground."* That's a substantial amount of food to list and stops them in their tracks.

Or if you have mischievous moments like I do, go the humorous route. Tell them you hate plants with every fiber of your being:

"It's my life's mission to take out as many of those SOB's as I can. A ruthless patch of zucchini once maimed my cousin in a dispute. Yes, zucchini have a mean streak, and I'm avenging my cousin one salad at a time."

Final Thoughts:

- Don't: Talk about your diet until asked.
- Don't: Preach or be self-righteous.
- Don't: Get defensive and take comments personally.
- Don't: Be obnoxious when dining out/ordering.

Important Nutritional Tips

Nutritional information - The provided nutritional information is a loose estimate, and shouldn't be looked at as exact scientific measurements.

Serving sizes - The recipes are not gender-specific, but I usually offer flexible amounts of ingredients, such as 1-2 tbsp. or 1-2 scoops.

I also recommend men to focus on the higher amounts while women focus on the lower amounts. Of course, another way to adjust the meal plans to your nutritional needs is by addressing the amount of servings.

Frequency of meals - There is a great deal of hype that eating smaller meals multiple times a day is "healthier" than eating larger meals less frequently.

This relatively new "truth" in health is misunderstood: smaller meals aren't necessarily healthier, but they help maintain a more balanced flow of energy throughout the day.

We tend to get more tired after larger meals, because it requires more energy to digest large amounts of food. If your schedule doesn't allow for eating five or six times a day, you can adjust the meals by grouping some of them together.

Non-dairy milk - These days, we have several non-dairy options of milk, which

include almond, hemp, oat, rice, soy, flax, and coconut, and probably more to come. Unsweetened or plain is generally your best bet for the purposes of my recipes, but feel free to jazz it up with flavors like vanilla or chocolate. Just be sure to note any sugar content differences

Sweeteners - If a recipe is too bland or not sweet enough, simply add some raw honey, smashed/pureed dates, or stevia.

Prep-work - With some pre-chopped veggies and pre-cooked beans, you can hit the ground running with numerous recipes, shaving hours off your weekly dietary execution. I can't emphasize enough how much this will help. I recommend that you invest in some containers for the appropriate foods you will be working with, so you can do plenty of prep-work on days when you have some down-time.

Swap Rice for Quinoa - Quinoa tastes similar to brown rice, but has much more protein. Additionally, quinoa is a complete source of protein, whereas brown rice is not. Complete proteins play a significant role for the process of building muscle and strength.

Supplements - Be sure to review the [supplement guide](#) for more detailed information, but generally, try to get most of your nutrition from whole foods.

Get Sufficient Calories - This can prove to be challenging at first as a vegetarian, and not getting enough calories is one of the main reasons novice vegetarian bodybuilders fail at building muscle. If you don't consistently take in enough calories, your body is much more likely to use your protein intake for fuel. This could create a deficit, and stop your gain dead in its tracks.

BODYBUILDING AND MIND-BODY FITNESS

To build muscle, it takes a lot of work, energy, and resources.

The body is reluctant to make a dramatic change to its current state. You must train it so that it has no choice but to grow and get stronger. Also, be sure to convince your body that there's an abundance of food and nutrition by eating all day, every day.

A common belief is that women can't build as much muscle as men because they don't have as much testosterone. This is true, but also a little misleading. Recent studies show that protein synthesis and gene signaling that lead to muscle gains, which are the primary factors for building muscle, are nearly equal between young men and women.

Another common belief is that women can't lift heavy like men. This is completely false. I train women just like men, and they advance equally as fast.

Lift Heavy Weights Using Compound Exercises

All of the top-level experts whom I look to for advice, especially strength expert Pavel Tsatsouline, recommend a shorter number of repetitions with a heavier weight and using compound exercises (squat, deadlift, bench press, etc.). This is the optimal training equation for building both size and strength.

This can, and should, vary if you want to train strictly for strength, or strictly for size.

For those who are unfamiliar with Pavel, he is a former physical-training instructor for Spetnaz, the elite Soviet Special Forces, and is currently a consultant to the US Marine Corps, Secret Service, and Navy SEALs.

Muscle and Strength Protocol:

- First, test your one-rep-max (the heaviest weight you can lift one time) to gauge your strength at the beginning of this protocol. Be sure you warm up thoroughly beforehand and have someone spotting you.
- Each exercise will consist of five sets.
- Each set will consist of five repetitions.
- The first sets are to warm up your body and get it used to progressively heavier weight until you reach your "working set" (the last set that is also the heaviest).
- Determine your working set by finding the maximum amount of weight that you can do for seven or eight repetitions.
- For each repetition, count three seconds up and three seconds down (or vice versa). This slower movement eliminates momentum, creates maximum stress on the muscle, and helps prevent injury.
- Take three minutes between sets. During your "rest," always keep moving. Either perform a different exercise that trains another part of your body, or casually walk on a treadmill or ride a bike.
- Test your one-rep-max again in five weeks to determine your progress with this protocol.

Strength Skills That Compound Your Efforts

Generalized strength skills that fortify all displays of strength:

- Work on flexibility and posture with yoga or Pilates. This will make you stronger in the weight room.
- Build your breath with breathing exercises.
- Build your hand grip strength.
- Build strong abs.
- Meditate daily. It is a form of mental training that will strengthen your ability to focus. The world's top bodybuilders, powerlifters, and athletes know how important this is, and all of them are exceptional at focus.

These complementary practices will help with all of your efforts in the gym. Try them for 30 days to test them for yourself.

You will want to alternate these skills with different training protocols every five to six weeks to continually shock your body, since it will adapt and progress will slow to a halt.

For example, if you reduce your volume to the point where you can recover faster and more efficiently without greatly draining your amino acid pool and glycogen stores, you can train muscle groups twice per week instead of once.

The most important thing to remember is to listen to your body.

Ladies, be sure to use heavy weights: one of the most common reasons women don't get results from training is that they use weights that are too light because they fear that they will bulk up like a man. This misunderstood myth has no scientific validity to it.

Workout Schedule

Lift heavy, but keep the reps low. I recommend 6-8 repetitions for each set you do. Please refer to the workout sheets on the Members Area web page.

- Sunday - Flexibility Practice*
- Monday - Chest/Delts
- Tuesday - Legs
- Wednesday - Flexibility Practice*
- Thursday - Back/Traps
- Friday - Biceps/Triceps
- Saturday - Off

*Yoga, Pilates, CrossFit, or Martial Arts

Abs and calves can be trained every 2-3 days, integrate as needed.

If you like the results, stay on that path. If you don't, simply make 1-2 minor changes, and continue to journal for another 30 days. Without pen to paper, it's too easy to have a misleading impression of what you're actually eating and what's actually working. Without giving it enough time to work, you can stop a good process short without even knowing it.

Making Time for Your Workouts

How you spend your time breaks down to priorities. How important is fitness and bodybuilding to you? I am certainly not asking you to choose between the gym and your family or your job.

But if diet and fitness are important to you, the people around you need to understand that. The more you vocalize your fitness goals, the more likely your loved ones will respect your dedication and call you out when you start slacking.

Get Plenty of Rest

Your workouts make up the primary way to build muscle, but rest and diet also contribute. Think of it as a recipe; missing just one ingredient will ensure the desired result won't happen. Rest gives your body time to repair, get stronger, and build muscles. Experts generally recommend at least 72 hours between training the same muscle group again.

Why Bodybuilders Should Practice Meditation

Early in life as children, we are conditioned to cease being "human beings" to become "human doings," so we can be productive members of a capitalistic society (another discussion for another website). A primary feature of meditation is re-conditioning ourselves to a state of be-ing again: being fully enveloped and permeated by the present moment.

What does that have to do with fitness?

Before the UW-Madison study was conducted, other mindfulness-based trainings showed positive effects on inflammatory disorders, which can be common among athletes and bodybuilders.

In fact, the [American Heart Association](#) has made public statements linking meditation to the prevention and intervention of inflammatory conditions, heart disease, and stroke.

This recent study also showed that meditation correlated with faster physical recovery after stressful situations. Bodybuilders and athletes performing in any sport can benefit from quicker recovery times after moderate to extreme exertion.

As sports meditation coach George Mumford explained, "When we are in the moment and absorbed with the activity, we play our best. That happens once in a while, but it happens more often if we learn how to be more mindful."

Meditation Benefits for Bodybuilders:

- Better focus while training in the gym, leading to higher intensity
- Ability to cope with physical pain
- Helps stabilize emotional and hormonal imbalances
- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Deeper sleep leads to faster, more complete recovery

Mindfulness meditation can create beneficial molecular changes, and lead to faster physical recovery.

A recent study by researchers in Wisconsin, France, and Spain proved that mindfulness meditation creates positive molecular changes in the human body.

The results of the study, which were published in the [International Society of Psychoneuroendocrinology](#), investigated the effects of intense mindfulness practice with a group of experienced meditators and a group of untrained control subjects.

"To the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper that shows rapid alterations in gene expression within subjects associated with mindfulness meditation practice," commented study author Richard J. Davidson, founder of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds and the William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#).

After eight hours of mindfulness practice, the experienced meditators exhibited a range of molecular and genetic differences, including positively altered levels of gene-regulating machinery and reduced levels of pro-inflammatory genes.

Interestingly, this correlated with faster physical recovery from stressful situations. Even though the subjects who were inexperienced in meditation engaged in quiet and peaceful activities for those eight hours, they experienced no genetic changes whatsoever.

Therefore, Davidson and his fellow researchers concluded that mindfulness practice can lead to positive epigenetic alterations of the genome. "Our genes are quite dynamic in their expression, and these results suggest that the calmness of our mind can actually have a potential influence on their expression," Davidson said.

Yes, Real Men (and Women) Meditate

Here in the West, we have developed a culture around meditation and yoga practices that suggests that they are effeminate (unmanly). The reality is meditation and yoga was originally created by men, for men, in [ancient India](#) (where vegetarians thrive) around 1500 BCE.

Not Just for Skinny New Agers

Mindfulness meditation isn't one of those hippie fads where you sit cross-legged in an incense-filled room, chanting mantras in a foreign language. In actuality, mindfulness meditation is the practice of focusing your mind on the present, while being fully aware of your thoughts and without judging yourself.

Being mindful means making a conscious effort to pay attention to your inner self and notice where you are right now, rather than fixating on the past or worrying about the future.

When practiced over time, this practice transcends thinking and activates our consciousness to "see above the clouds." Knowing that you're eating is not the same as mindfully eating, and being aware that you're working out is not the same as mindful strength training.

Once you can incorporate mindfulness into your bodybuilding and/or fitness routine, you will see more purpose in your actions and more passion in your goals.

Tips for Starting a Meditation Practice

- Especially at first, don't be hard on yourself when your mind starts to race with thoughts or wander off.
- Don't judge or expect an experience: just be...and allow (even if it's your mind racing).
- Focus on your breath, it has a calming effect.
- Try listening to relaxing music or nature sounds to quiet your mind.
- Don't ignore or suppress thoughts as they arise; simply be aware of them and let them pass like clouds through your mind.

Please refer the dedication section on meditation in our Members Area for detailed instruction on how to develop your practice.

Other ways to think about mindfulness meditation:

- Exploring the human experience in a way that science or religion will never be able to opens doors to understanding ourselves better. In other words, experiencing experience.
- It introduces us to a space that is too beautiful and profound for ordinary language and thought.
- It is the way in which we can intentionally investigate and transform our experience in the present moment, and come to understand some durable truths about the nature of human consciousness and broader realities.
- You don't need to believe anything about the deep mysteries of the Universe, physics, or religion to meditate. It can be a truly secular wellness practice. All that is needed is to become interested in your own inner world/consciousness and to experience the benefits of meditation.

Yoga: The Perfect Balancing Apparatus for Bodybuilding

Bodybuilders can benefit from a yoga practice because it offers a much needed balanced perspective on health, strength, and flexibility.

Bodybuilders tend to think one-dimensionally, and lift heavy weights for hours on end. The truth is, you can integrate yoga, or any other flexibility practice (Pilates, CrossFit, or martial arts), to accelerate the process.

Flexibility practices build the strength in our bodies in synergistic ways and on multiple levels. They also help us become more functionally strong, which has a practical application in day-to-day life.

Clearly, one of yoga's biggest perks is injury prevention. This can allow us to train even harder in the gym.

Those are some great reasons to start a yoga practice.

Unlike other exercises that target specific body parts, yoga is a full-body workout that stretches and strengthens pretty much every muscle in ways that lifting free weights cannot.

Baron Baptiste, yoga pro and former assistant coach for the Philadelphia Eagles, points out that men who strength train often breeze past those hard-to-train muscles, like the knees and lower back.

"Over-training in any one sport can cause repetitive stress and other more serious injuries. Yoga is a full-body workout that creates both strength and flexibility. You need to have both. One without the other is a recipe for disaster," Baptiste advised.

Numerous studies by the [National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine](#), a branch of the National Institutes of Health, have shown that yoga is beneficial for:

- lower back pain
- improved back function
- lower heart rate
- lower blood pressure
- reduced anxiety and depression
- improved overall fitness
- **heightened strength and flexibility**