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Macronutrients:

Macronutrients are protein, carbohydrates, and fat. They provide calories/energy for the body. Termed 'macro' because they are nutrients the body needs in large amounts.

A breakdown of the macronutrients and their corresponding energy content:

Protein- 4 calories per gram

Carbohydrate 4 calories per gram

Fat- 9 calories per gram

*FYI Alcohol (NOT a macronutrient)- 7 calories per gram, for the drinkers in the audience.

Macronutrient ratio.

Many different 'diets' say that a particular ratio of one macronutrient to the other is key.

I believe it is personal choice, really. Some people digest carbohydrates better than others and some people are more active than others, so I would say that a greater ratio of carbs is good for you if it fits your lifestyle. It is necessary to take into consideration your activity level and how quickly you metabolize food. It is unhealthy to consume too much of any one single macronutrient. Too many carbohydrates can lead to weight gain and insulin resistance, too much protein may hurt the kidneys, while too much of particular types of fat can cause cardiovascular problems. Balance is important in life- especially when it comes to what you eat.

It is important to eat a diet that is not only healthy but also realistic for the long term so it won't turn into short-lived "fad diet". Eating healthy should be

a continual lifestyle choice and not a temporary fix because the results would be just that: temporary.

How to calculate your macronutrient ratio:

Hopefully you have already done the math to figure how many total calories you should be consuming a day in the previous section. Now we will take it further and break it down into specific macronutrient calories/grams based off the percentages you choose.

Example:

If you calculated that you need 2000 calories a day (this is minus some calories but not lower than your BMR)

And say you choose this ratio/percentage: 25% fat, 25% protein, 50% carbs:

*Remember you may choose a different ratio for your needs.

1. Convert your macronutrients percent to a decimal form.

25% fat= .25 25% protein= .25 50% carbs= .50

2. Multiply your total calories by the macronutrient in decimal form.

2000 calories total * .25= 500 calories from fat per day

500 calories from protein per day

2000 calories total * .50= 1000 calories from carbohydrates per day

To calculate how many calories per macronutrient per meal you need, divide the 'calories a day' number by 3. (That is, if you plan on eating three squares a day, which I recommend- no snaking. I have explained why under Week 3's Education section covering hormones. Skip ahead to that part quickly if you wish but then come back here.)

Fat= 500 calories a day /3 meals a day= 166 calories per meal from fat.

Protein= 166 calories per meal from protein

Carbohydrate= 1000 calories a day /3 meals a day= 333 calories per meal from carbohydrates.

If you want to convert to grams a day per macronutrient take the number of calories calculated for each macronutrient per day and divide it by the corresponding number of calories provided per gram of the macronutrient.

*Remember 1 g protein= 4 cal, 1 g carb= 4 cal, 1 g fat= 9 cal)

Protein= 500 calories a day /4 calories per gram= 125 grams a day

Carb= 1000 calories a day /4 calories per gram= 250 grams a day

Fat= 500 calories a day /9 calories per gram= 56 grams a day

If you eat three meals a day, take each amount calculated for grams of each macronutrient per day and divide by 3. This will show you how many grams of each macronutrient you would need per meal.

Protein= 125 grams a day /3 meals= 42 grams per meal

Carb= 250 grams a day /3 meals= 83 grams per meal

Fat= 56 grams a day /3 meals= 19 grams per meal

I find it easier to use grams rather than calories but it is all personal preference.

If you take the time to find a good macronutrient percentage for yourself and plan your meals accordingly you will have control over your eating way beyond your imagining. Lack of meal planning can be the demise of a person who is working on having their eating habits under some sort of control.

After time it will become easy to know what you should and shouldn't eat, and how much of it, as previously mentioned, and you will soon learn the importance of *when* you should eat your meals too.

I realize that there are many, many different ways to eat.

There are Paleo dieters, Atkins dieters, South Beach dieters, Alkaline diet, Mediterranean diet, Fat flush diet, Beyond Calories diet, vegeterains, lacto-ovo vegeterians, ovo vegeterains, vegans, fruitatarians, meatatarians, etc.

I am not saying there is one magical, perfect, and specific way to eat. I am just trying to educate the best I can so that you can make the best choices that you can for *yourself*.

Usually on days that you do more cardiovascular work, I'd recommend fewer carbs, moderate protein, and more fat. On days when you do strength training eat more carbs, less fat, and moderate protein. This is to promote the fat burning process. During and after cardiovascular exercise, your skeletal muscles are more sensitive to insulin and readily uptake and store glucose.