The LFT Nutrition Guidebook

LIVE FOR THIS
FITNESS

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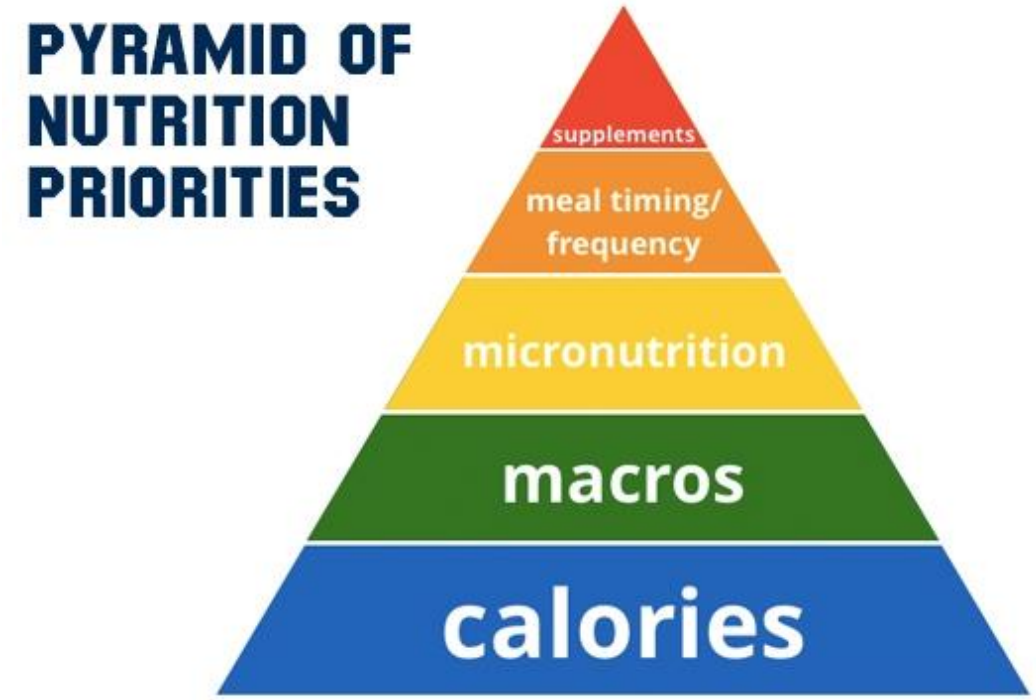
Introduction

Have you ever 'Googled' or been looking at nutrition info online and thought, "Whoa! There is a lot of contradictory information out there and I'm not sure what to believe!"? Don't worry, you are not alone and that is why we have put together to following guide to provide you with a baseline of what the foundation of ANY successful nutrition program/strategy looks like.

The reality is that we are all different and there are many plans/programs that will work well for each of us. That being said, the core of any successful nutrition strategy is highly likely to contain most of if not all of the following. If it does not, we are very confident in stating that it is very unlikely to be to produce results and at the end of the day that's all we want!

Without further ado let us introduce you to the Pyramid of Nutrition Priorities!



Cross your eyes, and imagine the pyramid above is one huge, layer cake and the little red blur at the top is a cherry.

Now, if the first four layers of the cake are made of manure, cardboard, dust, and wheatgrass (let's face it, that stuff is terrible) respectively, is that cherry going to make a difference to the taste? – Spoiler alert, it's just going to make it taste likely a slightly cherry flavored sh*t sandwich.

So where does that leave us?

Well, it depends on how you look at things. If you are after a shortcut when it comes to nutrition, I have some not so great news...

1. We cannot eat just 'clean foods' and ignore calories.
2. We cannot supplement our way out of a bad diet.
3. There are not "special meal timing tricks" to enable us to binge eat in the evenings.
4. Putting fat in our coffee in the mornings and expecting it to help us magically burn more fat just makes our coffee taste awful and, shockingly, does not actually help us burn more fat.

However, what this does mean is something that we believe is even better than a shortcut - There is a vast scope for personal options when it comes to nutrition plans, **AND** it does not have to be expensive.

Results are the only thing that matter, and here is what matters for results.

Level #0: Sustainability

If you went directly from being sedentary and tried to train by running a marathon every day you would be beyond wrecked at the end of the first week if not shorter. We have to work up to running a marathon with a strategic, periodized approach.

In the same way that we approach training from a "what is an appropriate level of stimulus for me now?" perspective, we want to use that same approach in the way we set up our diets and nutrition plans.

As a society, we generally do not have a weight loss problem, we have a rebound problem.

We are the product of our habits, not what we do for short periods.

So, make sure you choose a path of least complexity that will get you the results you are after in order to be able to sustain it.

Level #1: Calories/Energy Balance

Energy balance determines whether weight will be gained or lost. Unfortunately, this is often times a vastly overcomplicated part of the equation. Our bodies, although very complex, abide by laws of thermodynamics.

If you are training really hard (you work out at the best gym in the Denver Metro area after all), not gaining muscle and not gaining weight, calorie/energy balance is your problem. You need to eat more calories.

Similarly, if you feel that you are being careful about selecting foods so that you eat only "healthy" foods, but are not losing weight, calorie/energy balance is your problem. You need to eat less (in terms of calories, not necessarily volume which is an important discrepancy).

In order to find a starting point for your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure), if you train 3-5 days per week at LFT, have a reasonably sedentary job, and are not obese, multiply your bodyweight in pounds by 15, this will approximate your energy needs.

If you are then looking to lose around 1 pound of fat per week, just subtract 500 calories from your daily target.

This is just a starting point and we can dive much deeper into these details, but for now, know that this step can be as easy as that. It is not worth stressing this number too much because all energy calculations are just estimations and your TDEE will shift as your body composition changes. Ultimately, what is important is that you stay consistent and track how this works out for **YOU**.

If you want to get fancy this TDEE and weight loss calculator from Precision Nutrition is awesome –

https://www.precisionnutrition.com/weight-loss-calculator

Level #2: Macros

You may have heard it said that while energy balance determines whether weight is gained or lost, macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates, and fat) determine whether that change is fat or muscle mass.

Though this simplification underrepresents the importance of training, macros play an exceptionally important role in how fast we reach our body composition goals, and whether we reach them at all.

Protein

Adequate protein intake ensures that we have the building blocks for recovery, growth, and to prevent muscle breakdown. It is also the most satiating macronutrient, which makes it useful for combating hunger when we are dieting. Plus, who doesn't loving crushing some steak every now and then (I mean besides vegans and vegetarians. You all can crush a tofu steak)?

If you shoot for roughly 1g per pound of bodyweight, you should have your bases covered.

If you are a particularly thin, or thick, this may give you a slightly low or high figure respectively, so setting your intake at the same as your height in cm is a better ballpark figure to go with.

Carbohydrate and Fat

Carbs and fats fuel the body.

Fat is essential for hormonal regulation.

Carbohydrates, though not essential, help fuel our training which is the key weapon we have in our arsenal to tell the body to hang on to muscle when dieting. It is also the spark for muscle growth when in a weight gain phase. Which means we don't want to go too low in either.

Most people will do well when setting fat intake at 20-30% of their calorie budget, and the rest of as carbohydrate. In most people this will leave with a 40% Protein, 30% Carbohydrate, 30% Fat macro split.

Setting your fat intake super high and your carbs low can be problematic. Ketogenic diets may be trendy right now, but since you probably do not have compromised insulin sensitivity, it is unlikely that a ketogenic diet would be particularly advantageous for you. You are an athlete, and you need to eat like one. Much of the latest scientific literature does not support metabolic advantages for these diets, and they are overly restrictive for most people, making diet adherence harder. Like we covered in Level #0 diet adherence is a key to success.

Level #3: Micronutrient Considerations & Water

If you think of your macronutrition as the fuel you put in your car, think of micronutrition as the oils that lubricate it. A diet with micronutrient deficiencies will not be immediately detrimental, but in the long term it will impact your nutrition and torpedo your training efforts.

Fortunately, this doesn't have to be complicated. By observing a few simple rules of thumb regarding your daily fruit and vegetable intake you can safeguard against deficiencies.

Here are some key points:

1. Aim to eat a fist of vegetables with every meal.
2. Aim to eat 2-3 fists of fruits each day
3. A multivitamin is not a substitute for a poor diet, but it is additional insurance on a good one.
4. If you have issues with energy, feel hungry, wonder why your skin is pale, or have inconsistent sleep patterns, it *could* be that you are short of a few vitamins or minerals.
5. Water is also important for fat loss and performance. Around 16 cups per day for men and 11 cups per day for women will do.

Lastly, remember, once you have the micronutrients that your body needs, you do not get extra points for eating more of them. More is not better when you are eating enough. So do not be sucked into the 'superfood' hype (nobody needs to eat 50,000% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin C).

Level #4: Nutrient Timing & Meal Frequency

The fitness industry has been continually evolving recommendations regarding nutrient and meal timing.

The industry started with a very simplistic approach of eat big, think big, get big. Lately, in my opinion, the pendulum then swung too far to the right of moderation towards excessive attention to detail. The

new standard became “eat many small meals throughout the day” and if you do not have protein 30 seconds after your workout and post to Instagram you will lose all your gains!

As is the case with most of these things, the truth is somewhere in the middle.

Here are some guidelines:

1. Aim to eat 2-3 meals if you are in a fat-loss phase, 3-4 meals if you are in a muscle gain phase. If you are just sustaining your weight, 2-4 will do. (You can eat more frequently than this if you prefer, the downside is that the extra work with meal planning can threaten adherence.)
2. Aim to eat within two hours of finishing your training.
3. Don’t train completely fasted. Have a whey shake or BCAA drink at the minimum. (This is not counted in the meal frequency guidelines above.)

Level #5: Supplements

Supplements are the smallest part of the puzzle, but they can be useful. They can be divided into health and performance supplements, here is the short list that will be applicable to nearly everyone.

Note that protein powder is not listed here as we consider it to be a powdered food, not a supplement.

Health Supplements

Multivitamin - A good insurance policy against deficiencies. - 1/day when cutting, not normally needed when bulking.

Essential Fatty Acids - Usually consumed in the form of fish oils, when appropriately dosed, EFA’s help with leptin signaling in the brain, reducing in inflammation, enhancing mood, and reducing disease factor risk. They can also aid in joint recovery and have shown potential for some metabolic benefits as well. - 2-3g/day, EPA and DHA combined.

Vitamin D3 - Having insufficient levels of vitamin D in the body can compromise the immune system, which can be a disaster for someone who is training hard, dieting, or attempting to perform any type of activity at a high level. - 9-36 IU/lb/day (20-80 IU/kg/day) based on sun exposure.

Performance Supplements

Creatine monohydrate - By far the most tried and true, most affordable, and most effective of all the creatine variants. It will benefit strength and power production. - 5g/day

Caffeine - Pre-Workout to enhance performance – 1.81-2.72 mg/lb (4-6 mg/kg)

Beta Alanine - If you think of creatine for power, think of beta-alanine for longer anaerobic performances. - 3-4 g/day only if doing continuous high intensity exercise for 60 sec+ (you know like we do in pretty much every BOD at LFT).

The rest you do not really need to bother with. Trendy right now are “exogenous ketones” and “HMB”, however, there is no scientifically backed practical application for these supplements under normal circumstances. BCAAs are helpful if you will be training fasted but will not do much for you otherwise if your protein intake is sufficient for the day.

Conclusion

Hopefully, this will serve as a starting point for you to build a solid nutrition foundation. If you have any questions or would like to dive deeper into world of nutrition we would be happy to be your guide. Reach out to us and we can help put together an individualized nutrition plan for you!