

Module 10 Lesson 9

Transcript

Today we're talking about calorie and macro calculating for those of you who love to number crunch. Before we dive in, I'll preface it with this. Calories aren't everything. As you know from TNS Level 1, I rarely talk about calories with my clients and instead focus on the quality of their food, the proportion of nutrients, and the portions of food using HQ. In this lesson, we're going to cover common myths and truths about calories, how to use macronutrients to track daily intake, and diet recommendations for athletes and exercisers. Okay, so let's do this. It's still pretty recent that we've decided that not all calories are created equal. I feel like I've been saying it forever, but it's really still generally pretty new. I've never been a calorie counter, but I do still remember learning that 3,500 extra calories equals one pound of weight gain. It wasn't that many years ago.

It's pretty new that we're telling people that 3,500 calories of jelly beans aren't the same thing as 3,500 calories of almonds. Still, people hold on tight to their old ways, and I cannot tell you how many clients sit in my office and tell me that they burned 350 calories on the treadmill, or that they don't know why they haven't been losing weight because they're only eating 1,200 calories a day. We're really holding tightly to the idea of calories when it comes to weight management. I don't know if this analogy works, but let's go for it. 100 yen deposited into your bank account isn't the same as 100 euros isn't the same as 100 pesos. They all yield different amounts once the transaction rates are calculated. Same with calories. I'm just quickly going to clear up the confusion here. When calories go into the body based on what the calories are made up of, they go through different pathways of digestion and storage, not equal processes.

Different calories also have different impacts on hormones, especially hunger and satiety hormones. Calories from fat have different thermic effects and absorption pathways than protein and carbs. Each of these differences make an impact, and one more thing. Certain calories that are linked to fiber, fat, or protein keep you more satisfied and fuller longer. Bottom line, stop counting calories, friends. Which brings me to counting macros, a more detailed way for athletes to track and monitor overall intake and essentially a way to keep tabs on macronutrient goals. The idea is that you calculate your calorie needs and then break that down into fat, carbs, and protein. Calorie needs will vary by age, gender, and activity. Then, based on the individual goals, typically for athletes it's recommended 45 to 65% of calories from carbs, 20 to 35% from fat, and 10 to 35% from protein. So, now you have the number of calories you want for each macronutrient.

Next do some division. There are four calories per gram of carbohydrate and protein and nine calories per gram of fat. Now you have the number of grams you want to aim for for each

macronutrient. I'm sure you're still with me, right? You're with me. Then, once they have their numbers, athletes tend to track their macros through a food journal or an app. The good thing about counting macros is that the quality of what you eat matters to some extent. You're forced to choose higher quality nutrient-dense foods when you're counting your macros when compared to simply counting calories, again, to some extent. While I'm not the biggest fan of tracking and counting and carrying the ones which turns eating into mathematical equations, I do have to admit that if macro counting is what my high level athlete client is doing, and they're really into it, I can use it as a tool with the plan that I craft.

However, I don't generally recommend macro counting for the average exerciser at all. The biggest barrier to counting macros is that it takes a lot of thinking, calculating, checking nutrients, and the learning curve is kind of steep. After a while, my clients say they get used to it and some athletes, again, do enjoy it, but rarely does someone stick with it for the longterm and again, the average exerciser, not necessary. They may keep a framework from the research they needed to do to get started, but even my most dedicated gym rats tend to pull away from the strictness and the structure as time goes by. As I say for most diets, everything from paleo to Whole30, it can be helpful to use something very structured as a starting point, but the ultimate goal is healthful whole food eating that is both flexible and structured and works for the individual.

So, now it's time to review the key points from this lesson. The bottom line, stop counting calories. Calories are not created equally. Counting macros can be a detailed way to track intake for some athletes. Calculate calorie needs and do some math. I typically recommend for athletes 45 to 65% of calories from carbs, 20 to 35% from fats, and 10 to 35% from protein. There are four calories per gram of carbohydrate and protein and nine calories per gram of fat. Even my most dedicated athletes often move away from detailed counting after they've gotten used to their routines. The ultimate goal is healthful whole food eating that is both flexible with a little bit of structure that works for the individual. I will see you in the next lesson.