

The Lean Machine



Sometimes weight isn't the issue. Your weight is fine, but you just can't seem to see a great deal of definition. You lift weights in hopes of gaining more muscle and less fat, but the results just aren't visible. Basically you want to be more ripped or if not you, your coach does. So what can you do?

Evaluate Your Diet for Balance

Diets high in refined carbohydrates, ranging from white bread, biscuits, waffles, pancakes, pizza and bagels to simple carbohydrates coming from sweet tea, punch, soda or even bin candy, could be providing too many extra, nutrient-empty calories. Calories from carbohydrates increase fluid retention, which will mask definition. In addition, if consumed in excess amounts they are readily stored as fat. You need carbs., so don't eliminate them, just switch to healthier ones.



In addition, diets high in fat; which is much more calorically dense than protein and carbohydrate, can pack on a lot of extra "hidden" calories. Choosing an "Italian sub" with salami and deli meats or always having the "Alfredo", the ribs or wings, is a sure way of packing on the calories.

Are you allowing yourself food from all six food groups? No foods are "bad" and all foods can be included in a healthy diet – in moderation.

Switch to a Diet High in Fruits, Vegetables, and Complex Carbohydrates

Look for foods rich in fiber and other nutrients such as beans, legumes, wild and brown rice, whole wheat cereals and grains, and sweet potatoes with skin. Try to reduce consumption of refined sugars (simple/white sugars), which include many of today's "fat-free" products. In addition, make sure you are taking in adequate protein and that you do include some fat mainly from olive, canola and peanut oils, which are healthy.

Check the labels for whole wheat. Whole wheat bread is made entirely from whole grain wheat flour. Bread labeled simply as wheat bread (excluding the word "whole") usually contains a mixture of mostly enriched white flour with a smaller amount of whole wheat flour.

Timing is Everything

Are you eating three meals a day? Skipping meals slows down the metabolism, and makes the body less efficient at burning fat. In addition, if you are skipping meals, then when you finally eat, you're often so hungry that you end up over-eating, which is not good, especially later in the day or early evening, when you won't be engaging in a lot of activity.

You should get most of your calories throughout the day, when you need them most. Eating small meals every few hours is the best way to go. You'll also never get overly hungry so that you can manage the quantity more readily.

Also, ask yourself if:

- ✓ As you have increased your exercise time/weight, have you also increased your calories slightly?
- ✓ If you're lifting weights and trying to build muscle, make sure that you've increased your calories to support the body in building new muscle.

Get Enough Protein

Is your diet adequate in protein, especially if you're not a big meat eater? Are you having dairy products such as milk, cheese, eggs, egg whites, or yogurt regularly? Do you eat chicken, fish, tofu, peanut butter, nuts, and seeds, and/or beef regularly?

These are important contributors to protein in the diet. Men's diets tend to be too high in protein and women's too low. Double check yours.



The Lean Machine (continued)

Liquid Calories

For some reason, most people don't think of what they drink as having calories. So, if we are wanting to burn fat for energy and not store it, then we have to look at all calories. If you are drinking beverages with calories, then that is contributing to your total energy intake. If you're drinking a lot of sweet tea, punch, even 100% juice or Gatorade™ it all provides calories. Oh, don't forget all the alcohol over the weekend. Somewhere you may wish to consider making a change to something less caloric. If you're not ready to give up the alcohol, trying cutting back. When each lite beer is about 120 calories and you know you drink more than 3, than you're piling on the weight.

Aerobic Exercise, Exercise, Exercise

The bottom line with body fat, is burning it, so we can become more defined. The best way to burn it is through aerobic exercise. The leaner you are the more efficiently your body burns fat. So, even though you may be working out already, make sure that you are engaging in an activity that keeps your heartrate up for 30 minutes at least 4-5 times a week. Sprinting, although an exhaustive activity, is predominately carb. burning, not fat, so try to get in an additional "aerobic" activity.

