

The Official ***CHEAT SHEET*** for New Members

by Matt April of Bent On Better

Let's be real.

The goal isn't to be the healthiest human being on the planet, is it?

Of course not. So, why should we try to act like it is?

You want a diet and training program that is easy enough to stick to and that follows the core philosophies of health: eat well, improve your physical and mental wellness, and enjoy life. Eating kale salads with antibiotic- and hormone-free, oven baked, boneless skinless, chicken breast sure is healthy, but I know that I wouldn't want to eat that every day. I like pizza and all kinds of beer, and I'm sure you have your favorite foods that may not quite fall under the "healthy" category, and that's OK. Although it's an imperfect plan, occasionally eating foods like those, in moderation, allows me to make progress towards my goal while still enjoying life. Does it make me as healthy as humanly possible? No. But that's not my goal, and I'm almost certain it's not yours either.

The purpose of fitness is to help us *optimize* our time on planet Earth, because the goal isn't to be the healthiest human alive, it's to make the time on the rock matter. For most people, how long we're here, how well we feel, how we move, how healthy we are, and how we look are what drive us to do this "gym" thing. So let's do it, together!

We have to *optimize* our lives. What do I mean by *optimize*? We have to balance the things in our lives like having fun and eating the foods we enjoy with perfect health.

Plain and simple, my goal isn't to optimize your *entire* life...

My goal is to use fitness to make your life **BETTER**.



So, let's start simple:

1. Let's up the fruits and vegetables

Most of us can't go a single day without seeing supplements and pills to "help" give our bodies the vitamins and minerals we *need* to be healthy. The easiest way to ensure you're getting enough of those important vitamins and minerals is to increase your fruits and veggies, plain and simple. Your fruits will help keep your sweet tooth at bay, while the vegetables will help to fill you up, and both will give you the nutrients you need for healthy living.

2. Let's get your calories aligned with your goals

Depending on the goal at hand, whether it's weight loss, weight gain, or to maintain your current weight, your calories must be aligned with your goals. For weight loss, you must consume less calories than you're using throughout your day. For weight gain, you must consume more calories than you're using throughout your day. To maintain your current weight, you must make sure your calories consumed match the calories burned each day. No matter where the calories come from, if you don't abide by the aforementioned guidelines, you will never see a change.

3. Let's get adequate sleep

Most of us just do not get enough sleep. When you have a goal of weight loss, weight gain, or healthy weight management, you need to make sure your body has the right amount of time to rest and repair itself. The repairing process occurs only with full sleep cycles, typically obtained with 7 to 8 and 1/2 hours of sleep per night. We lead busy, hectic, time-demanding lives, and usually sleep is the last priority on the list (if it even makes it). If you want to see results, adequate sleep needs to be a part of the process.

4. Let's make sure you're getting proper hydration

When talking about proper hydration, I'm specifically talking about water. Simply stated, there needs to be more of it in your daily life. How much you ask? The simple rule of thumb is to shoot for half your body weight in ounces per day.

5. Let's do some strength training

Many of us want to “tone” and “tighten” up specific areas of our bodies, but I hate to be the bearer of bad news: sadly, you cannot target specific parts. All we can do is improve our lean body mass (a more realistic approach to “toning/tightening”). The best way to improve our lean body mass is with strength training.

6. Let's work on stress management

When you're overly stressed, your body produces hormones that will counteract your efforts for weight loss. There are many ways to help manage stress, and exercise is one of my favorites. Maybe it will become yours. Until that day comes, try other means of physical activity such walking the dog, doing yoga, meditating, listening to music, reading a book, talking to family or friends, prayer, arts & crafts, and so on and so on.

7. Let's get some extra protein

The amino acids that make up the proteins you eat also happen to be the building blocks of your muscles. Not only does protein make sure you're giving your muscles the supplies they need to rebuild correctly, but protein is also very satiating. Eating protein with every meal will help make sure you stay full longer (and specifically for weight loss, that's a good thing!).

8. And let's add some healthy fats

Fats also play a vital role in our bodies. Fats help to make sure our cell membranes can function properly. Our bodies use fats as precursors to hormones and for the regulation of uptake and excretion of nutrients in the cells.

When all is said and done, healthy living and weight loss can easily get overcomplicated, but Bent On Better is here to make sure you stay on track and keep it simple.

You do the hardest part and show up, we'll take it from there.

Bent On Better

Meal Plan

MEALS	OPTION A	OPTION B	OPTION C
MEAL ONE (BREAKFAST)	CARB CHOICE: 1/2 Ezekiel 4:9 sprouted whole grain english muffins	1 slice of Ezekiel bread (or Alvarado Street bread) w/ 1/4 Tbsp. butter or 1/2 Tbsp natural almond butter	1/2 cup rolled oats (Dry) w/ water
	PROTEIN CHOICES: Omelette: 3/4 cup liquid egg whites (about 3-5 large eggs) + 1 yolk, bell peppers, onions, spinach, 1 oz. cheese	2 scoops protein powder w/ water or unsweetened almond milk	4 hard boiled egg whites, 1 yolk
MEAL TWO (SNACK)	CHOICES: 1 fruit of choice w/ palmful (1 oz) of raw almonds, sunflowers seeds, or walnuts	Cottage cheese w/ sliced apples: 1/2 cup low fat cottage cheese, 1/2 apple (cinnamon optional)	Green smoothie (choose from recipes provided, page)
MEAL THREE (LUNCH)	CARB CHOICE: 1/2 cup of brown long grain basmati rice, cooked, 1/2 cup vegetable	1 medium sweet potato, 1/2 cup vegetable	1/2 cup quinoa, cooked, 1/2 cup vegetable
	PROTEIN CHOICES: 1 chicken breast, boneless skinless 4 oz	94% fat free ground turkey, 4 oz	Salmon or tuna (if canned, white albacore) 4 oz
MEAL FOUR (SNACK)	CARB: Romaine lettuce salad and/or baby spinach (as much as you want) w/ dressing <i>Dressing optional – Balsamic vinegar w/ 1 tsp virgin olive oil, or lemon juice, or salsa</i>		
	PROTEIN CHOICES: 1 chicken breast, boneless skinless 4 oz	3 hard-boiled egg whites, include 1 yolk	Tuna (full can, white albacore) 4 oz
MEAL FIVE (DINNER)	CARB CHOICE: asparagus, squash, and broccoli sautéed in 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil seasoned (w/ seasoning optional)	red peppers, onions and spinach sautéed in 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil seasoned (w/ seasoning optional)	Brussels sprouts, garlic, onions, and peppers sautéed in 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil seasoned (w/ seasoning)
	PROTEIN CHOICES: 1 chicken breast, boneless skinless 4 oz	94% fat free ground turkey, 4 oz	Any seafood of choice, 4 oz
MEAL SIX (SNACK)	OPTIONAL (IF HUNGRY)	Protein shake: 1 scoop protein w/ water OR unsweetened almond milk	

Weekly Groceries

Starter Shopping List

	Item	Qty	Store
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rolled Oats		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fruit (fresh or frozen)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eggs		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Egg Whites (pasteurized)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsweetened Nut Milk (almond, cashew)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plain Greek Yogurt		
<input type="checkbox"/>	All Natural Nut Butter		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quinoa		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rice		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetable (fresh or frozen)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avocado		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Potatoes		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Raw nuts (almonds, cashews, peanuts)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Salmon		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lean Ground Turkey (92% or higher)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ground beef (92% or higher)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chicken Breast (Boneless Skinless)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuna		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ezekiel 4:9 sprouted english muffins		
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			
<input type="checkbox"/>			

5 Simple Steps To Improve Your Sleep

by Matt April of Bent On Better

One of the most important habits in a healthy lifestyle is quality sleep. Being a parent, a spouse, or another role with a lot of responsibility can sometimes take precedence over personal health. When a busy person has a goal of weight loss, it's crucial to acquire and practice good habits. Here are five tips to improve the quality of your sleep so you can think more clearly, reduce stress, and live a longer, healthier life.

BLACK OUT THE ROOM

Any type of light entering your eye will stimulate brain activity and either keep you up, wake you up, or disrupt your sleep. You need to take steps to create as dark of an environment as possible. Cover up all windows and doorways that might be letting light into your room. Also, be aware of electric devices like cable boxes, alarm clocks, TVs, and even cell phones as they may have small light sources. These devices need to be covered up or removed from your bedroom as even a tiny light can cause a problem. The true test of a perfectly dark room: you shouldn't be able to tell the difference between having your eyes open or having them closed.

COOL THE ROOM

Research has shown that a room between 68°F and 70°F is "optimal" sleeping temperature. If that seems too cool for you, consider using a blanket. A warmer or cooler room may cause disruption in sleep patterns due to your resting body temperature. A fan is also a good option to keep your bedroom on the cooler side.

CUT OFF TIME FOR ELECTRONICS

Try to stop using any electronic devices 30 to 60 minutes before going to bed. We previously talked about how light entering your eyes will stimulate the brain, and the same thing is true while you are awake. Using your computer or your phone or simply watching TV can stimulate your brain and keep it active. As you are trying to fall asleep, you want to slowly calm your brain, so try to limit the use of these things devices before going to bed to make falling asleep a bit easier.

CALM YOUR BODY & BRAIN

If you really want to get high quality sleep, you need to start calming down your body and your brain long before you want to go to bed. Static stretching, reading a book, or deep breathing are simple things you can do to slowly calm yourself down when preparing for bedtime. Also, gradually dimming the lights will help your body and brain realize it's time to rest.

CUT OFF TIME FOR FOOD

There are two big reasons why you want to stop eating 1 to 2 hours before bed. Number one, your digestive system also needs to rest and regenerate at night, so if you eat before bed, you're making your body continue to work throughout bedtime and into the night. Secondly, the hormonal response to food can cause your body to release hormones that will counteract your body's natural sleep-releasing hormones. You are basically ingesting hormones that say "time to do stuff," while your brain is releasing hormones say "it's time to rest," which can obviously alter the quality of your sleep.

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What is a personal trainer?

A personal trainer is a nationally certified or nationally accredited person who has (or at least, *should* have) a vast understanding of the human body and the mechanics required for physical fitness, weight loss, and healthy living. Not all trainers are created equal, however. When choosing a trainer, you want to make sure he or she not only has the credentials, but also has the personality that YOU enjoy. The last thing you want to worry about when you're focusing on a fitness goal of any kind is if you're going to get in an argument with your trainer during your workout or after. 😬

Where did you get certified as a personal trainer?

This question may not matter to you, as long as you know the trainer you've decided to work with can help you reach your goals, but sometimes shedding some light on this topic can be why some trainers train differently than others. N.S.C.A., N.A.S.M., and A.C.S.M. are the gold standards. There are many great trainers out there who are not certified, but it's comforting to know that this trainer (me, Matt) has applied himself and studied a certain amount of pertinent information to receive his accreditation from N.A.S.M.

Should I stretch before or after my workout?

The research is inconclusive as to whether stretching before a workout or after a workout is better. However, you never want to try to stretch a "cold" muscle. If you choose to stretch, make sure your muscles are warmed up. Trying to stretch a muscle that is not warmed up would be like trying to pull apart a rubber band that was left overnight in a freezer— there won't be much progress made there.

After my muscles are warmed up, for how long should I stretch?

Each muscle you spend stretching should be held for a minimum of 30 seconds. After that amount of time, your muscles can actually *relax* and reap the benefit of your stretching. Additionally, be sure to stay even with your stretches. *What do you mean by stay even?* Great question! "Stay even" just means if you stretch your right leg for 35 seconds, make sure you do the same stretch on the left leg for the same amount of time.

Should I eat protein or carbs after my workout?

The answer is BOTH. Your post-workout is arguably one of the most important meals along your healthy living and/or weight loss journey, on the days you are training. After a workout, the energy in your muscles (glycogen) is depleted, so the carbs will help to refuel your muscles. Additionally, the protein is necessary for making sure your body can repair itself properly, after the beating you just put it through with your workout!

Should I train before or after work?

Train when you're least likely to blow it off or be forced to cancel. It will take you 10-21 days to adapt to a new training time, so stick to your plan and power through those tough times! I'm an early morning guy, I like to know I can knock out my workout without having to worry about it after a long day of work. Doing it in the morning also means I can shower once in that day before going to work. Saving the planet, one shower at a time. 😊

How many days a week do I need to workout to hit my goal?

Government guidelines recommend that the average healthy individual does 30 minutes of moderate cardiovascular exercise 3-5 times per week. The specific amount of exercise varies from person to person depending on many factors, one of those being your actual goal itself. According to the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), you should exercise 20 to 60 minutes, three to five days a week for health/fitness promotion.

Do I need to take dietary supplements?

Supplements for losing fat or building muscle are rapidly becoming popular. Claims that "fat-burning" supplements will decrease body fat are bologna. You do not need dietary supplements unless you have a documented vitamin deficiency or you do not eat a balanced diet.

What is my target heart rate?

Target heart rate—the heart rate range used to determine the desired intensity of an activity—will differ depending on the goal of the workout. You can calculate target heart rate using a percentage of your heart rate maximum (HRmax), which can be predicted by subtracting your age from 220, or by measuring your heart rate while you perform a maximum exercise test.

“I know someone who lost some weight on the _____ diet, should I do it too?”

Diets aren't for everyone, and most people who follow a diet only follow them for a short amount of time. They're depriving, they're lacking in flavor, nutrients, calories, vitamins, minerals... Well, you get it. Diets are not the answer. I will just say this: diets are temporary, but a healthy diet is forever. Knowing HOW and WHAT to eat is going to serve you much better in life than just knowing what to avoid.

“I only want to lose fat, and tone/tighten certain areas, what do I do?”

Work with a professional who understands the human body, fitness, the basics of nutrition, and someone who can help push you past any known or unknown physical and mental barriers you may have. Also, make sure you work with someone who can be straight forward with you and tell you that “toning” and “tightening” are just sexy-

fitness-terminology for lean body mass. 😊😇

How do I get rid of these flabby arms a.k.a. “bat wings?”

Contrary to popular belief, “spot reducing” and “spot toning” exercises do not work, because we cannot dictate from where our bodies will decide to oxidize fat, nor can we change fat into muscle. Doing triceps push-downs will not decrease the amount of fat you have on the backs of your arms any more than doing crunches will decrease the amount of fat you may have on your stomach. As you age, your skin will become less elastic and thus conform less to your arms. So “*flabby arms*” are somewhat a product of age. Any exercise that decreases body fat percentage will help you lose fat on your arms, just as it will help you lose fat from other areas of the body.

How do I get a flat stomach?

Genetics plays a role in whether or not you can obtain a flat stomach or a “six-pack” look to your abdominals. Having said that, two types of exercise can help: strength training and cardiovascular exercise. The abdominals are just like any other muscle group. For their definition to become visible, they must grow larger and the fat that lies over them must decrease. What makes the definition of the abdominals so difficult to see is that they are situated in the area of the body that contains the most fat. Strength training the abdominals is only half the story. You will get a flat stomach only if you

combine strength training with cardiovascular exercise to get rid of the fat. Most people do not do nearly enough cardiovascular exercise to decrease their body fat percentage to a point where they would see their abdominals. Even when the aerobic exercise stimulus is adequate, the role of diet must not be underestimated. All people with a flat stomach or six-pack have a very low percentage of body fat.

What is the difference between weight machines and free weights?

Ignoring the effect of gravity in creating resistance during all movements, free weights (dumbbells) keep the resistance on the muscle constant throughout the joint's range of motion (ROM), while weight machines use variable resistance, with the resistance changing throughout the ROM.

If I lift weights, will I look like a body builder?

Nope.

I'm sorry if this is your dream and I just crushed it... But no. This WILL NOT happen to you (especially if you're a woman). Lifting weights will not make you turn into the hulk and have gigantic muscles. Whether or not you will get bigger muscles (hypertrophy) depends on three basic factors: genetics, gender and training intensity. In relation to gender, males acquire larger muscles than females do, because males have greater amounts of testosterone and other sex hormones that influence protein metabolism. Thus, females experience less muscle hypertrophy with strength improvement than males do.

Will protein make me have huge muscles?

Consuming protein *will not* give you huge bodybuilder muscles. Again— *I hope I didn't just burst your dream bubble*. However, consuming the right amount of protein has many benefits. Some of the more notable benefits are that protein aids in weight loss by keeping you fuller longer, helps your body to build lean muscle tissue, and gives your body the right building blocks for overall health.

Why are my muscles sore after I exercise (and in the days after too!)?

Soreness results from high force production when an exercise is new or a load is greater than normal. This soreness in the days after exertion is called delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS). Although many people think that lactic acid is the cause of muscle soreness, the fact is that lactic acid (lactate) is removed from the muscles within 30 to 60 minutes after exercise, so it is long gone by the time soreness develops. To simplify, muscle soreness results from process in which micro-tears occur in the muscle fibers. Soreness typically increases in intensity during the first 24 hours post-exercise, peaks in the next 48 hours, then subsides within five to seven days after the workout. Don't worry, DOMS is not associated with any long-term damage or reduced muscle function.

How much should I sleep?

Although eight hours of sleep is the general rule of thumb, most of us live hectic lifestyles. However, new research has emerged stating that in order for the best brain function and healthy longevity, seven to eight hours of sack time at night is best.