



SCULPT STRONG FITNESS

STRONG NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE

LESSON 4



STRONG NUTRITION & LIFESTYLE

Nutrition can help or hinder specific goals of achieving certain health markers, fat loss, muscle gain, strength gain, and recovery from your training. When it comes to optimising your progress, especially if you want to make changes to your physique, prioritising nutrition is a must.

NUTRITION HABITS FOR EATING WELL

I like to use a habit-based approach to behavioural change to help you build the skills you need to eat well for a lifetime. Habit formation is integral to making changes that happen automatically and without thought even if your motivation wanes.

Nutrition and Lifestyle Factors

When deciding to make a change, it's common to try to change many aspects of your nutrition at once, which can feel completely overwhelming. This is why so many "diets" fall short or fail. In reality, instead of changing one habit at a time, most diets require changing dozens of choices and food-related behaviours simultaneously. Some of these typical changes include the types and amounts of food you eat, when you eat, how and what you buy at the supermarket, how much time you spend preparing food, and which restaurants you go to. No wonder it's so hard to make lasting change this way!

With a habit-based approach, you focus on practising one new manageable habit at a time until it feels natural, and only then do you add a new habit to the mix. By focusing on one habit at a time, you set yourself up for success over and over again, instead of feeling overwhelmed and discouraged.

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Foundational Nutrition Habits

The foundational nutrition habits establish the bedrock of good nutritional practice. These behaviours help build awareness of how food makes you feel, how much you need, and when you truly need to eat. They're impactful but can be very challenging. The three habits that form the base of our nutritional pyramid include:

- Eating slowly and mindfully
- Eating only when hungry
- Eating until satisfied (but not stuffed)

EATING SLOWLY

Being thoughtful about slowing down during a meal allows you to notice how hungry or satisfied you are. Intentionally slowing down allows you to chew your food thoroughly which aids in digestion. It also gives your stomach and brain time to communicate that you've received adequate nourishment.

How to Eat More Slowly - and Why It Matters

Step #1: Get a Baseline

Now, let's consider your current eating behaviours and the speed at which you eat. Eating slowly can help you:

- Avoid overeating
- Lose weight (if that's one of your goals)
- Better digest your food
- Eat more mindfully (and avoid rushing through a meal on autopilot)
- Build a healthier relationship with food

But it's easy to rush through our meals while zoned out or doing other things. So let's take stock for a moment.

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How do you currently eat most of your meals? For example, do you already know you eat quickly?

Are you pretty good at eating slowly?

Do you eat on- the-go or while doing other things?

What are the biggest roadblocks that stand in the way of eating slowly at your meals? For example, is it feeling crunched for time at work? Or trying to eat amidst screaming kids throwing food at the dinner table? Do you eat on- the-go, while running errands? Is it simply a lack of habit and awareness?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Now, let's flip things around and think about when you could most easily incorporate eating slowly (and move closer to your goals).

In what situations do you have an easy time eating slowly? For example, is it easiest when you have breakfast alone while your teenagers are sleeping in? Or on weekends, when you eat a nice meal out with friends?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Step #2: Put It Into Practice

When it comes to eating slowly — practice in a way that actually works for your life — I recommend starting with a two-minute half-time eating break.

I like using this technique first (rather than putting your fork down between bites) because most women say it's simply easier to do! You only have to remember one thing during each meal, rather than trying to remember something on every bite. While people don't often think of *easy* as being *effective* — in this case, easy is incredibly powerful because you're more likely to do the thing!

(Don't worry, you'll still learn how to incorporate the second strategy in just a moment. Or, alternatively, if you want to flip the techniques around because it works better for you!)

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

Realistically, you might not be able to take a break at every single meal. That's OK! Instead, set a goal for yourself for *how* you'll practice this new behaviour. When you get really specific and intentional, you're more likely to take action.

When and how often will you implement your two-minute eating break? The more specific, the better — but pick a goal that is realistic given your life right now. (e.g., "*I will take an eating break when I eat breakfast before the kids wake up*"; "*I will take an eating break at breakfast and dinner every day.*")

Sometimes it can be hard to remember to take the break when you're so used to eating without it. So take it one step further.

How will you remember to take your two-minute eating break?

(e.g., "*I will divide my meal in half before I start eating as a visual cue to pause when I'm halfway*"; "*I will set a two-minute timer when I sit down to eat — if I'm not halfway through when it goes off, I'll set it for another two minutes until I'm halfway done and can take my break.*")

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Step #3: Track It

All that's left to do is take action and track your consistency!

When you tune in to how many times you're actually taking action, you'll:

- Be more likely to keep going.
- Start stacking those small changes up time and time again (moving you closer to your goals!).
- Be able to see if you need to make any tweaks.

You can calculate your consistency by dividing the total number of times you engaged in an activity by the number of times you were meant to engage in the activity, then seeing what percentage you come up with.

I consider "successful" implementation to be a consistency of 80% or more. If you don't hit 80% consistency — don't stress. Take a few minutes and brainstorm some possible solutions. Maybe you need to make your goal a little easier, or try a different cue to remind yourself to take the break.

If you've been at least 80% consistent over one or two weeks, great work! You have two options now:

1. You can make things a little more challenging by incorporating the breaks at more meals.
2. You can start putting your fork down between bites. (You'll do this in addition to taking your eating break.)

Go through the same steps of getting really clear on when and where you'll do the practice and how you can cue yourself to remember.

Your prompt to remember "food in mouth, fork on plate" might look like:

- Putting a sticky note at your usual spot at the dinner table to remind yourself of the intention when you sit down.
- Making this a game with your kid, partner, or roommates. No one will call you out quicker on forgetting the rules than kids!

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EATING WHEN HUNGRY

As much as possible, it's important for you to wait until you experience mild to moderate true hunger prior to eating.

This may seem like basic advice, but it's quite the challenge for many people. You may be used to eating or feel inclined to eat due to extrinsic factors, such as it being a certain time of day or because you see or smell food. We encourage you to tune in and notice if you are experiencing **hunger**, or if it's just **appetite**.

Many people get **hungry**, though it's an important signal that tells them when they need nourishment. Eating when you feel physically hungry helps you become aware of your need for sustenance from food versus your desire for food due to emotional or psychological reasons. In most cases, if you're eating appropriately sized, well-balanced meals, you should get hungry every three to five hours.

An increase in **appetite** is a psychological want for food. When you are physically hungry and experience a physical need for food, you may experience a variety of hunger cues.

You may find it helpful to experiment with feeling slight hunger to figure out which cues help you understand when you are hungry and when you have increased appetite as a result of an external cue.

Many women report feeling a hollow or empty feeling, a growling stomach, or a noticeable drop in energy levels when they're physically hungry.

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The difference between Hunger and Appetite

HUNGER	APPETITE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A biological response to replenish the body's energy reserves.• Triggers generally exist below the neck (due to low blood sugar, a growling empty stomach, hormone fluctuations, a need for fuel to regulate body temperature).• Has a gradual onset.• Appears after several hours without food.• Typically diminishes after eating.• Generally satisfied by any food that provides energy (calories).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A desire or interest to eat a specific food, which is usually sweet, salty, or fatty.• Triggers generally exist above the neck (internal: thoughts, emotions, sensory experiences, hormones; external: environmental stimuli, physical aspects of food).• Associated with rapid onset.• Not time dependent.• May persist after eating.• Usually only satisfied by specific foods (e.g., sweet, salty) that may provoke emotions and thoughts afterward (e.g., pleasure, guilt, shame).

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EATING UNTIL SATISFIED

It's not uncommon to feel tempted to finish everything on your plate, regardless of how much of that food your body actually needs. Many of us were taught to do this as kids, and it's a hard habit to change. Part of the reason that I encourage you to slow down during meals and to eliminate distractions is to help you notice that moment when you've had just enough food so you can stop there.

Eating until satisfied also goes hand in hand with eating slowly. Eating too fast often leads to overeating. By taking your time during each meal, you'll increase your ability to sense when you've had just enough food to fill your tank, feel satisfied with what and how much you've eaten, and feel energised and ready.

Mastering this habit can take some time and experimentation. You may not recognize right away what "satisfied" feels like. If you know that you could take a brisk walk or do ten jumping jacks immediately after your meal and feel no discomfort doing it, that's a good indicator that you're feeling satisfied. If you feel sluggish, bogged down, or like you need to sit or lay down, you have likely eaten a bit too much. Eating only until you feel satisfied and nourished reduces your likelihood of overeating and can improve digestion and reduce feelings of fullness or bloating.

Goldilocks is a good example of finding your sweet spot of satisfaction. Aim to feel like you've had just the right amount of food—not too much, not too little. This may also take a bit of experimentation. You're going to discover how you can better pay attention to your fullness and find your own sweet spot so you leave every meal feeling satisfied while still moving closer to your goals.

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Hunger and Fullness Scale

At one end of the Scale, you have extreme hunger — a 1 out of 10, like you haven't eaten in several days.

On the other end, you're overfed. A 10 means you're totally stuffed and likely feeling a little sick.

Where you fall on the scale and how much you need to eat to move up a level will depend on the day and other related factors, like how much you've exercised and what you ate at your last meal. But ideally, you're never finding yourself at a 1 or a 10; you're going to fluctuate more around the middle.

Now, let's walk through how you can use this scale to tune in to your fullness cues and eat the right amount of food for your body's needs and your goals.

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Hunger and Fullness Scale

1	Extremely Hungry: No food intake over multiple days
2-3	Very Hungry: No food intake over a period of 8-24 hours
4	Moderately Hungry: No food intake over a period of 5-8 hours
5	Mildly Hungry: No food intake over a period of 3-5 hours
6	Underfed: Small amount of food eaten, but you would need to eat more to feel satiated
7	Satiated: Hunger is quenched, but you're slightly under capacity; you could eat a little more but don't need to
8	Full: You're comfortably full and at capacity; a few more bites could make you feel uncomfortable
9	Overfull: You're slightly over capacity; you might be a bit uncomfortable, sluggish, or even sleepy
10	Stuffed: You're well over capacity and may feel very uncomfortable, sick, or bloated

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Step #1: Remember Your Goal

What exactly do you want to achieve by improving your nutrition — also known as your why. You can use that goal to inform what level of fullness to shoot for in the majority of your meals.

- If your goal is fat loss, I encourage you to consistently eat until you reach a 7 on the scale. Your hunger has been quenched, you feel good, and you could eat a little more, but you don't really need to. You would feel comfortable getting up from the table to do some jumping jacks or take a brisk walk.
- If your goal is to maintain your current body composition, I encourage you to consistently eat until you reach an 8 on the scale. This is when you're comfortably full. You could get up and easily take a leisurely walk. But if you ate a few more bites, you'd start to become uncomfortable.
- If your goal is to gain weight or muscle mass, or to gain strength if you're an intermediate to advanced exerciser, we encourage you to consistently eat until you reach a 9 on the scale. Here, you're overfull. You would prefer to relax after your meal to "let your food digest." You might feel fine, or you might be slightly uncomfortable, sluggish, or even a bit sleepy.

Remember: It only takes between three and five bites for most folks to go up a level.

What level of fullness do you want to shoot for at the majority of your meals?

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Step #2: Set a Practice

There are two steps to eating enough (and not too much):

- Minimise distractions while you eat.
- Stop eating when you're at the right fullness level for your personal goal.

I recommend starting by minimising distractions while you eat. When you do this, you'll be better able to notice how you're feeling and when you've had enough.

Getting super clear on how you'll practise a new behaviour is critical when it comes to putting it into practice consistently and seeing progress. So take a moment and break down your specific intention for how you will minimise distractions while you eat.

How — and how often — will you implement minimising distractions while you eat?

(e.g., "I will eat lunch outside instead of at my computer on workdays"; "I will eat at the dinner table instead of in front of the TV six nights a week"; "I will put my phone in another room during breakfast every morning")

As you're minimising distractions, you can also start tuning in to how full you're getting over the course of the meal. Simply being aware of the **Hunger and Fullness Scale** and your goal number can help you pay closer attention and eat more mindfully.

For now, you don't need to worry about stopping at a certain level every time (though you could certainly practice as often as feels doable for you).

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Step #3: Track It

Next, track your consistency over the coming weeks. Consistency is key to helping these skills stack up over time for big results, and tracking is a great form of simple accountability.

You can calculate your consistency by dividing the total number of times you engage in the activity by the number of times you were meant to engage in the activity and seeing what percentage you come up with. I consider “successful” implementation to be a consistency of 80% or more over two weeks.

If you’re struggling to hit 80% consistency, it’s OK. Just take a few minutes and brainstorm possible solutions. You might need to make your goal a little easier, or create a more clear and specific plan for how you’ll enjoy your meals.

If you’re minimising distractions on a consistent basis (and you find yourself tuning in more easily to your satiation cues), great work! Stay the course. Just keep practising, or alternatively, minimise distractions at one more meal per day.

If you want to increase the challenge and be more structured about stopping at the fullness level appropriate for your goals, you can set an additional intention.

Just fill in the following sentence, and then start tracking that practice too. I will stop eating when I reach a ____ out of 10 on the Hunger and Fullness Continuum at/during _____

For example: “I will stop eating when I reach an 8 out of 10 on the Hunger and Fullness Scale at/during breakfast and dinner every day of the week.”

Remember: You will continue to minimise distractions at meals (and track the consistency of that skill), so I recommend pairing your new goal alongside the meals where you’re already tuning in without screens.