

Understanding Macros 101

A foundational guide to macronutrients—what they are, why you need all of them, and how your needs change throughout life.



Before You Count Anything...

Before attempting to count macros or cut calories, you should first understand how food affects *your* body. Make sure your **digestion is smooth**, your **sleep is restorative**, your **energy is consistent**, and you have **zero symptoms**. Counting macros without this foundation is like building a house on sand—it won't hold up. Fix the fundamentals first.

All Macros Are Necessary

There are three macronutrients: **carbohydrates**, **protein**, and **fat**. Each one plays a unique and irreplaceable role in your body. Cutting out or severely restricting any one of them can lead to imbalances, cravings, low energy, hormonal issues, and more.

The key is understanding what each macro does and learning to source them well—not eliminating any of them entirely. Your body needs all three to function optimally.



Carbohydrates

Carbs are your body's preferred and most efficient source of energy. They fuel your brain, muscles, and organs. Without adequate carbs, you may experience brain fog, fatigue, irritability, and intense cravings. The key is choosing **complex, fiber-rich carbs** that provide sustained energy and support digestion.

Best High-Fiber Carb Sources:

- Sweet potatoes & regular potatoes (with skin)
- Oats & oatmeal
- Quinoa & farro
- Brown rice & wild rice
- Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans
- Whole grain bread & pasta
- Fruits (especially berries, apples, pears)
- Vegetables (especially broccoli, Brussels sprouts, artichokes)



Protein

Protein is essential for building and repairing tissues, making enzymes and hormones, and supporting immune function. While protein is often pushed as "1g per pound of body weight," the truth is more nuanced. **Protein needs are flexible and can vary day to day** based on your activity levels, stress, recovery needs, and life stage.

More importantly, **protein needs to be sourced well**. Quality matters just as much as quantity.

Quality Protein Sources:

- **Low-fat poultry:** Chicken breast, turkey breast (skinless)
- **Fresh water fish:** Salmon, trout, tilapia, cod, sardines
- **Eggs:** Whole eggs or egg whites
- **Plant proteins:** Tofu, tempeh, edamame
- **Legumes:** Beans, lentils, chickpeas (yes, these count toward protein!)
- **Oats:** Often overlooked, but a good protein contributor
- **Greek yogurt & cottage cheese:** Low-fat versions

Proteins to Limit or Avoid:

- **Processed red meats:** Bacon, sausage, hot dogs, deli meats, pepperoni
- **Fatty cuts of red meat:** Ribeye, prime rib, ground beef (high fat %)

- **Fried proteins:** Fried chicken, fish sticks, breaded options



Fat

Fat is essential for hormone production, brain function, nutrient absorption, and cell health. There are "good fats"—but here's the catch: **fat is high in calories** (9 calories per gram vs. 4 for carbs and protein). Even healthy fats should be consumed mindfully, not freely.

Healthy Fat Sources (in moderation):

- Nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews) — a small handful
- Seeds (chia, flax, pumpkin, sunflower)
- Avocado — $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ at a time
- Fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, sardines)
- Olive oil — for cooking, not drinking
- Nut butters — 1-2 tablespoons

The Problem with Saturated Fat & Cholesterol:

Saturated fat and dietary cholesterol—found heavily in fatty meats, processed meats, full-fat dairy, and fried foods—can contribute to serious health issues over time:

- **Heart disease:** Plaque buildup in arteries (atherosclerosis)
- **High cholesterol:** Elevated LDL ("bad" cholesterol)
- **Stroke:** Blocked blood flow to the brain
- **Type 2 diabetes:** Increased insulin resistance
- **Inflammation:** Chronic low-grade inflammation throughout the body



Your Needs Change Throughout Life

It's not one size fits all. Your macro needs will shift based on:

- **Age:** Metabolism slows, muscle mass changes, nutrient absorption shifts

- **Life stage:** Pregnancy, breastfeeding, menopause, andropause
- **Activity level:** More active days need more fuel (especially carbs)
- **Stress & recovery:** High stress periods may require more protein
- **Health conditions:** Certain conditions change how you process macros
- **Goals:** Building muscle vs. maintaining vs. fat loss all differ

The amounts can vary. What worked for you at 25 may not work at 45. What works on a training day may not work on a rest day. **Listen to your body** and adjust as needed.



Key Takeaways

- ✓ All three macros are necessary—don't eliminate any
- ✓ Choose high-fiber, complex carbs for sustained energy
- ✓ Protein is flexible—quality matters more than hitting exact numbers daily
- ✓ Plant proteins (tofu, tempeh, beans, lentils, oats) absolutely count
- ✓ Fat is essential but calorie-dense—be mindful of portions
- ✓ Limit saturated fat and processed meats to protect long-term health
- ✓ Your needs will change—there's no permanent "perfect" ratio
- ✓ **Most importantly:** Fix digestion, sleep, and energy BEFORE counting anything

Verdura Method

Empowering you to transform your health through lifestyle choices—before reaching for medication.

