



Optimal fuel. Ultimate performance.

Why Doing More and Eating Less is Killing Your Progress

You're killing yourself in the gym, keeping calories in check, eating clean, making sure you're getting enough protein....so why isn't the scale moving? You've tried fad diets, magic pills, extreme cardio classes, but no matter how much money you throw at the problem, these quick fixes never seem to yield lasting solutions.

You are tired, hungry, stressed, sore and unmotivated. You're physically and mentally frayed. You wonder why you even bother. But you continue because, "no pain, no gain", right? Long term starvation is normal when fat loss is the goal, right?

Wrong. If your body is not responding to what you're doing, you need a change. And that change most likely isn't LESS food and MORE activity. It's the exact opposite. It's most likely time to implement a reverse diet.



Before we get into reverse dieting, let's talk about what happens when we under-eat.

When you restrict intake for extended periods of time, your body decreases energy output. Your metabolism slows down, which means that you're burning less calories on a day to day basis.



Chronic under-eating also affects our hormones. The nutrients we consume from foods can impact which hormones are being produced, when they are being produced, and in what quantities. This means that being in a caloric deficit can affect hormonal balances in your body. Your body is smart. When you are in a caloric deficit, your hormones will shift in a way that encourages you to consume more calories. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's your body's way of trying to keep you alive. And it's also why being in a caloric deficit for a very long time can feel really tough!

The bottom line is that your body adapts to the stimulus you put on it. And if you aren't fueling adequately by eating a proper caloric intake, metabolic adaptation occurs.

These are not adaptations that can be corrected by eating even less food. Instead, you will need to consume more calories and nutrients.

Fortunately, just as you can cause unfavorable adaptations, you can also reverse them. And the best way to do this is by reverse dieting.

What is reverse dieting?

Reverse dieting is the process of slowly adding calories to help restore hormone levels and metabolism after a period of caloric restriction. Reverse dieting is beneficial to those who have been restricting their intake for a very long time or have a history of aggressive dieting.

Here are the major benefits of reverse dieting:

- 1) You have more energy. You are fueling your body better, therefore, energy levels increase. As your energy levels rise, so do mental function and mood.
- 2) You get to leave the dieting mindset behind. Though this is very difficult for most, it's important that you shift your mindset and keep the focus on fueling your body rather than depriving it.
- 3) It's an opportunity to restore metabolism and hormones. More food/energy coming into the body will help to increase metabolism and rebalance hormones.
- 4) Sleep quality improves
- 5) You will enjoy your workouts again. Let's face it, training while in a calorie deficit is not fun. You battle physical and mental fatigue. You lose strength. This changes when you start fueling your body adequately.



How to reverse diet

Reverse dieting can be a scary thing to navigate, because most people think that more food means more fat. But if you take things slowly and are strategic with your reverse diet, this isn't necessarily the case.

If you suspect that you're under-eating, track your food for a week to get a baseline. It's important to know where you're at so you can make the appropriate changes.

Once you figure out where you're at, slowly increase your calories each week. Typically increasing by 100-200 calories/week is a good starting point, but it's important to reassess how you're feeling as you progress through your reverse diet. You may need to slow things down to let your body become accustomed to the increased amount of food. Or, if you're feeling good and your body is responding well, you may be able to increase in larger increments.

Make sure you're eating plenty of protein. Your body needs protein for growth and maintenance of tissues.

Engage in heavy resistance training at least 2-3x/week. Lifting weights speeds up your metabolism in the short-term, and it also helps to build muscle, which will speed up your metabolic rate in the long term.



Will I gain weight while reverse dieting?

There are 3 potential outcomes of a reverse diet:

- 1) Lose weight (this does not happen often)
- 2) Bodyweight stays the same (but you are eating more, sleeping better, have more energy, and are most likely experiencing body re-comp, which is the process of reducing body fat and adding muscle mass.)
- 3) Gain weight (this typically happens to those who come from a background of chronic under-eating or disordered eating.)

If you gain a little weight, don't freak out. As you increase your carbohydrate intake, your muscles are going to hold more water and glycogen. You can potentially see an increase on the scale with NO change in body fat levels.

If you are gaining weight fairly rapidly while adding calories, you may need to take things slower in order to allow your body more time to adjust.

Tim



1/15/18
2300 cals/day
330lbs

4/1/19
3100 cals/day
270lbs

Tim joined the ACE Nutrition team in January 2018. When he started with me, he was eating roughly 2300 calories/day and weighed 330lbs. He was eating well under his TDEE (total daily energy expenditure) so we spent the first 3 months reverse dieting and were able to work his intake up to 3700/day with no weight gain. At that point, we had plenty of room to cut Tim's intake back and prompt fat loss. Over the past 15 months, I have worked with Tim on cycling in and out of fat loss & performance (eating at maintenance or in a surplus) phases, which has resulted in a 60lb loss on the scale.

How do I know when to stop reverse dieting?

Obviously, we cannot keep increasing calories forever, so it's important to know when to stop increasing your intake, and this will be different for everyone. It depends on your dieting history, how deep of a caloric deficit you were in to begin with, how long you were in a caloric deficit, and your mindset (how well you're handling increasing your food intake mentally and emotionally.)

In most instances, a reverse diet takes anywhere from 3-12 months, and possibly longer. This will vary quite a bit from person to person based on how fast you reverse, how well your body responds, how high you'd like to get your calories, and your long-term goal. In my personal experience of under-eating, it took about 1 year of reverse dieting and then another year of eating at maintenance before biofeedback (mood, energy, sleep, etc) dramatically improved.

Typically, you want to stop increasing your intake once you've reached your TDEE (total daily energy expenditure) or when your body weight starts to steadily increase.

What do I do after my reverse diet?

Maintenance! Our bodies do not like mixed signals, so you don't want to constantly switch back and forth between extremes. I almost always recommend going into a period of maintenance after a reverse diet. This helps your body to recognize your new baseline.

I suggest hanging out in maintenance mode for a minimum of 3 months, and possibly up to a year (this largely depends on how long you were under-eating prior to your reverse diet.)

After a good maintenance phase, you have options. You can:

- 1) Continue to maintain – choose this option if you want to set yourself up for even easier fat loss later on.
- 2) Switch to fat loss - choose this option if you have excess body fat to lose. You are in a much better position to shed unwanted fat now that your metabolism is healthier.
- 3) Switch to muscle gain – your metabolism may be more forgiving now that you've spent time reverse dieting and maintaining. Whereas in the past, a caloric surplus would have led to unwanted fat gain, the potential for muscle growth is increased now that your metabolism is healthier. Keep in mind that you need to be providing the right stimulus (weight training) to your muscles in order to facilitate muscle growth.

Nancy



1500 cals/day
144lbs

2200 cals/day
126lbs

Nancy joined the ACE Nutrition team in 2016. She was 144lbs at time, and over the past 10 years had tried every low-calorie fad diet in hopes to lose 10-15lbs. When she started working with me, she was under-eating, our first move was to reverse diet and get her to an adequate calorie intake. Over the past 3 years, Nancy has put a lot of consistency and effort into her nutritional habits. She currently maintains a bodyweight of 126lbs and is eating about 2200 calories/day. Also, she is 60 years old! She is a great example that hard work, patience, and consistency pays off at any age.



1400 cals/day 2400 cals/day

The bottom line

Losing weight is not that difficult but maintaining your weight loss is. The only way to break free from yo-yo dieting is to ditch the fad diets, diet pills, & detoxes, and learn how you can work *with* your metabolism and not against it. This is why reverse dieting is so beneficial. It's a healthy way to set yourself up for lasting results. If you're unsure of how to navigate a reverse diet, hire a coach to help you through the process.

If you have questions or need help with your reverse diet, [apply here](#) to work with Kellie.

ACE Nutrition client testimonials

"I began working with Kellie just over three months ago. I reached out to her because I needed help getting on track. I was finding that, as I got older, I was having a difficult time maintaining my weight, and I wasn't happy with the direction I was headed.

With guidance from Kellie, I've learned how to make food choices that better support my fitness goals, recognizing that those goals will change with time. My relationship with food has never been bad. Thanks to Kellie, though, I have a much greater understanding of the connection between eating well, feeling well, and making physical gains, at any age.

I have learned so much from Kellie in our short time together. I look forward to connecting with her each week to strategize and determine my focus. I appreciate that she pushes me, while offering support each step of the way. I feel as though I found Kellie at the perfect time, and I'm excited about what I'll be able to accomplish with her support and guidance."

-Wendy Olcott

"I started working with Kellie when I thought that I wasn't strong enough to compete as a heavyweight strongwoman athlete. I had witnessed via live feed my trainer & training partners completely dominate at the Nationals competition and I made it my goal to be with them the next year. I knew that Kellie had the tools to get me where I wanted to be. We started the process of reverse dieting so we could kick my metabolism into gear. A few months into it, we learned that my body didn't want to be a middleweight, it was happy in the 200 pound realm. This was a hard thing for me to accept but with Kellie by my side, she helped me fuel my body to become the strongest that I have ever been. I met my goal – I competed with my team at Nationals and took 3rd place in the HW division. Kellie is extremely knowledgeable and will push you to your limits to meet/exceed your goals. You may not like her at times during the process but she's got your back! Kellie will be your biggest cheerleader during the transition from bad/fad diets to an actual lifestyle change. I now appreciate life without the fear of having someone scold me for enjoying a piece of pizza, some ice cream, or a cocktail (or sometimes 3) because that is what she wants her clients to do...LIVE!"

-Jocelyn Delworth

"I have been a client of Kellie's for almost 4 months and have made a lot of positive changes because of my work with her. I have increased my calories through reverse dieting, improved the quality of my food choices, and been tracking my macros. I am building my new lifelong habits. This process has been helping to reset my metabolism as well as helping me learn how to eat in a healthy way. I'm excited to see where I can go with Kellie's help. She is always supportive and creates a plan unique to me and my needs. I'm so thankful that I decided to call her and start this journey." ☺

-Michele Taylor



Kellie Largay is a Precision Nutrition L1 & L2 Certified Nutrition Coach. She is also an NCI L1 Certified Coach and Hormone Specialist. Kellie specializes in working with people who come from an undereating background and are looking to learn how to fuel their bodies for their sport, hobby, daily activities, or to prime their body to lose bodyfat sustainably. She has worked with numerous National and World Class athletes in helping them learn how to eat for optimal performance in their sport, as well as people who are looking to build sustainable healthy habits that'll allow them to live a happier, healthier life.

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