



Bulking and Cutting, Done Properly

How to build muscle and reveal it, without the common mistakes

Bulking builds muscle by eating in a surplus. Cutting reveals it by losing fat in a deficit. Done well, they are simple. Done badly, you gain too much fat or lose hard-won muscle. Here is how to get both right.

The basics

Bulking

- Eat above maintenance to build muscle
- Best when you already train hard and want to grow
- Expect small, steady weight gain

Cutting

- Eat below maintenance to lose fat
- Best after a bulk, when you have muscle to reveal
- Aim to keep the muscle you built

Bulking well

- Aim for a modest surplus of 200 to 500 kcal a day, gaining about 0.5 to 1 lb a week (1 to 1.4 lb is a good sweet spot).
- Choose nutrient-dense food, not junk. Aggressive "dirty" bulking just adds fat and makes cutting harder.
- Keep protein high (1.4 to 2.0 g per kg) and keep progressing your training.
- Slow down if your waist grows faster than your shoulders, or you cannot tell muscle from fat.

Cutting well

- Keep the deficit moderate, around 500 kcal a day, losing 0.5 to 1% of body weight a week.
- Longer, gentler cuts protect muscle better than crash diets.
- Push protein higher, 2.3 to 3.1 g per kg of lean mass, to hold onto muscle.
- Keep lifting. Resistance training preserves muscle, while too much cardio can burn it.
- Adjust as you go, since your metabolic rate falls as you lose weight.

Bust the myths. You cannot bulk and cut well at the same time, bulking is not an excuse for junk food, and cutting is not just endless cardio. Muscle is built and kept through training plus protein, in the right calorie balance.

Refeed days

On a cut, a planned higher-carbohydrate day (a 300 to 800 kcal surplus, once or twice a week) can restore glycogen, support hormones like leptin, and lift your mood. Keep it planned, though, an unplanned blowout can wipe out a week of deficit.

Where to learn more: the British Dietetic Association (BDA), the International Society of Sports Nutrition (ISSN), and the Sport and Exercise Nutrition register (SENr). See also the Muscle Gain leaflet. For a plan tailored to you, get in touch.

This leaflet is general nutritional guidance for education only. It is not medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, and it does not replace advice from your GP or a registered dietitian. Always check with a qualified professional before making significant changes, particularly if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or take medication.

Ready to take the next step? Book a free call or start your food diary analysis at performancenutritionlondon.co.uk