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Medicine. It is best to limit your protein shake consumption to 20% of your total daily protein intake; there are, with a 225 gram daily target you should only be consuming 45 grams of protein from protein shakes. This equals to approximately 1.5-2 scoops of protein powder per day depending on the brand you use. You can replace a meal with a mass gainer shake if you are short on time or struggling to eat enough because you're too full; however, I don't recommend doing this more than once per day because it is best to consume most of your calories from whole foods. If you are losing weight or continuing to maintain your weight for two consecutive weeks, then you should increase your intake beyond 3000 calories per day. I would recommend adding 500 calories if you've been maintaining your weight or 1000 calories if you've been losing weight. The amount of weight you will gain by eating 3000 calories will depend on how many calories it takes for you to maintain your weight. If you can maintain your weight by eating 2000 to 2750 calories then you would likely gain between 0.5 to 2lbs per week. Check out all our meal plans or view similar calorie specific meal plans. 2500 Calorie Meal Plan 4000 Calorie Meal Plan Aragon AA, Schoenfeld BJ. Nutrient timing revisited: is there a post-exercise anabolic window? J Int Soc Sports Nutr. 2013 Jan 29;10(1):5. doi: 10.1186/1550-2783-10-5. PMID: 23360586; PMCID: PMC3577439. Colby Roy Colby Roy is a holistic health and nutrition coach. She is certified through Precision Nutrition and has a passion for all things nutrition and healing the body. More specifically, Colby likes to work with clients who want to optimize their gut health and energy levels. On Staff at FeastGood.com, we have Registered Dietitians, coaches with PhDs in Human Nutrition, and internationally ranked athletes who contribute to our editorial process. This includes research, writing, editing, fact-checking, and product testing/reviews. At a bare minimum, all authors must be certified nutrition coaches by either the National Academy of Sports Medicine, International Sport Sciences Association, or Precision Nutrition. Learn more about our team here. If you have any questions or feedback about what you've read, you can reach out to us at info@feastgood.com. We respond to every email within 1 business day. Back in 2013 the “Bulking Diet” craze reached fever pitch. Everyone I talked to was touting bulking diets as the best meal plans for building muscle mass, fast.The idea is simple:Eat a load of food every day that surpasses your basic daily calorie requirements.In other words, stuff your face with a surplus of calories and watch the scales climb, without concerning yourself with putting on body fat.Sure, this tactic worked.Men and women in gyms were “getting big” and gaining muscle with this diet plan. In fact, it was – and still is – a common way for professional bodybuilders to build muscle.A lot of bodybuilders go through periods of “bulking” where they increase body mass (muscle and fat), followed by a “cutting” phase where the excess body fat is burned off later.It’s a popular practice, but not a practical one for the average guy or girl looking to add muscle and get in shape.The thing is, pro bodybuilders don’t really care how they look most of the year. All that matters to them is how they look on competition week. Even if that means waddling around like marshmallow man for 10 months out of the year.But you want a body that looks great year-round.You want to gain weight, but you don’t want to get fat, right?Today, people want to look lean, shredded, ripped, athletic, and muscular.It’s encouraging to see more and more people opting for “Lean Bulking” or “Clean Bulking” diet plans, which are the best way to build lean muscle mass through nutrition.Those bulking diet plans sure moved the needle, but caused people to get fat as hell in the process. They’re a far cry from the best lean bulking meal plans for gaining muscle while staying in great shape.If anyone ever told you, “Eat big to get big,” they were right – and very wrong.Indiscriminately stuffing one’s face day after day can cause even the hardest of hardgainers to put on mass.I mean, anyone can gain 20 pounds of bloated fatty mass, but who wants that? It takes an intelligent nutrition strategy and optimized meal plans to gain dense lean muscle mass.Building muscle requires dedication and patience, not just in the gym, but also in the kitchen.If you want to add lean muscle mass to your frame without gaining too much fat, then you’re going to have to get the right meal plans in place.Gaining strictly lean muscle tissue, without an accumulation of adipose fat is a challenge, since putting on muscle mass requires a larger than normal calorie intake, which if not controlled properly can lead to more gains of fat than muscle.The thing is, when it comes to muscle building nutrition, more doesn’t equal more. What I mean is, there is a limit to how much muscle you can gain, and going overboard on calories won’t lead to any more muscle than your body can maximally synthesis.However, when it comes to fat deposition, more definitely equals more. Consuming a ton of excess calories will lead to a ton of stored fat. Unlike muscle growth that has a limit and stops, fat storage doesn’t – that’s why you need to adopt a “lean bulking diet” plan if you want to build lean gains in muscle.Before you start, you need to be critical about your current body fat levels.If you consider yourself as overweight, chubby, or have body fat over 16% then you’ll need to lean down a bit before starting any bodybuilding diet. Because if you’re currently fat, then a diet plan that creates a calorie surplus is likely to make you fatter.Plus, you’ll look like crap from start to finish.If you’re skinny, slim, lean, or around 10% body fat or less then you’re good to get started.You want to start this diet program off when you’re reasonably lean, and finish reasonably lean, with an increase in lead muscle mass.Now that’s out of the way, let’s look at how you’ll go about creating these meals for building muscle – with minimal fat – by crunching some crucial numbers.Let’s get started creating your lean muscle building meal plans, shall we?The first step is to calculate your daily calorie requirements for building muscle.You can do this by taking your current lean body weight (lbs) and multiplying it by 17.Remember, you’re looking for your lean body weight, not your entire body weight.Let’s say you’re 185 pounds and you’re around 15% body fat.185 x 0.15 = 27lbsThis calculation tells you that you’re carrying around 27 pounds of fatty mass.Next, subtract the weight of the fat from your total body weight.185 – 27 = 158lbsIn this example, you’re around 158lbs of lean body mass, and this is the number we’ll be working with.Simply multiplying 158 by 17 (158 x 17 = 2,686) gives you a number of calories to consume each day. This should be a big enough surplus of energy to help build muscle, while small enough to keep fat storage to a minimum.Of course, this isn’t perfect (no such calculation exists), but it should work well for most people. The idea is not to be too aggressive with the surplus, but provide enough for recovery and growth, while staying lean.Now, I don’t know what number you’ve got, so we’ll stick with this example.Let’s say that you should be eating 2,686 calories per day to build muscle.Those calories are going to come from macronutrients – protein, carbohydrates, and fats, in the following ratios (give or take 5% either way).35% Proteins 5% Carbohydrates 20% FatsHere’s how to calculate your calories into grams per day.Protein: 35% of 2686 = 940 calories ÷ 4 = 235g per day Carbs: 45% of 2686 = 1208 calories ÷ 4 = 302g per day Fat: 20% of 2686 = 537 calories ÷ 9 = 59g per dayAll you would do, is change “2,686” with whatever number of calories you need to be eating.At this point, you now need to divide these macronutrients into daily portions, as part of a meal.You can eat anywhere from 3 large meals, to 7 smaller meals each day. It’s really up to you, the important thing is hitting your numbers by the end of the day.With that said, to maximize protein synthesis and anabolism over the course of a day, consume a minimum of 3 meals spaced no more than 4 hours apart. It’s my recommendation that you eat 4 – 6 meals per day, as this is most optimal for growth.Ok, let’s meet in the middle and use 5 meals a day in this next example.Take your daily macronutrient totals above and divide them by 5.Protein: 245g ÷ 5 meals = 47g per portion Carbs: 315g ÷ 5 meals = 60g per portion Fat: 62g ÷ 5 meals = 12g per portionI know what some of you might be thinking right now...“Barry, exactly 47g of protein per meal, and exactly 60g of carbs, and exactly 12g of fats, that’s going to be really difficult to pull off!”If that’s what you’re thinking, I’ve got good news for you.You do not need to be 100% accurate with this, it would be impossible to hit these numbers exactly, dead on, with each meal. And it’s not even necessary, you just need a rough guide to work with.Out of your 5 daily meals, some might have 30g or 50g of protein, some might have 60g or 70g of carbs, and some might have 5g or 20g of fat.What matters most with this, is that you’re in a slight calorie surplus each day, and that you’re hitting as close to your daily macronutrient targets as possible.But you do not need to obsess over every calorie and every gram of protein, carbs, and fat. Simply consume foods within the region of your daily targets.What follows in this guide is a list of the best foods you can use to build a great muscle building diet plan, and just after that you’ll find some ready-made example meal plans ranging from 2,000 – 4,500 calories.2000 – 4500 Calorie Muscle Building Meal Plans PDFThe example meals plans are just that – “examples”.You do not need to follow these generic meal plans exactly as they are set out. The purpose of the plans is to show you how to eat, structure, and layout your diet.They are there to guide you in constructing your own daily meal plans.We all have different likes and dislikes.Not everyone is going to like Salmon, not everyone is going to like Tuna, not everyone is going to like peanut butter. The meal plans are flexible. Everyone has different tastes, and some people have limited access to certain foods.For these reasons, you can modify the meals to your taste.It’s not going to make a difference to your results if you swap foods from the same food group, that has a very similar nutritional profile. For example, you could swap chicken for turkey, or oats for bread, or olive oil for coconut oil.If you’re changing foods, just make sure that your calories and macro totals remain pretty much unchanged. If you’re changing one lean protein food that provides 30g of protein, then make sure that your replacement food provides an equal amount of protein.More details about food preparation to follow.But first, let’s take a look at some of the best food choices for preparing a muscle-building meal.One of the most common rules for protein is that for every pound of body weight you should have a gram of protein (this may also equate to 35% of your daily calorie limit).With this said, the body can only use so much protein at one time, meaning that it is important to spread it out over the day – most importantly, before and after working out. Be sure to stick with lean proteins such as egg whites, fish, white chicken and turkey mean, and whey or soy isolate supplements.These are high in protein and low in fat. But this does not mean that fat and carbs should be neglected altogether – in fact it’s the opposite; these are just needed in different amounts at different times, such as breakfast and post workout.Whole Large free range Egg (68g)Calories: 103Protein: 8.5gCarbs: 0gFat: 7.6g