



FOODGUIDE

Your foundation for a healthy and energetic lifestyle

FOODGUIDE

A healthy lifestyle.
Doesn't just change your body.
It transforms your mindset,
Your attitude, and your energy.
Your choice.
Your commitment.
For yourself.



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1. YOUR HEALTHY FOUNDATION

You've made the conscious choice to invest in yourself and work with us toward a healthy lifestyle and a fit, strong body. As you probably already know, exercise alone isn't enough to achieve this. For lasting results, there are three key pillars: movement, nutrition and your inner stance, in other words, who you are.

To help you get started with the nutrition pillar, we've put together this Foodguide. It's designed to help you navigate the often confusing world of the food industry. We follow the principle of "eating as nature intended" and aim to raise your awareness, so you can make conscious choices.

We guide you step by step in building a nutritional pattern that suits you. It's important to understand: this isn't a diet. The goal is to adjust your behavior and lifestyle while giving you guidelines that allow you to make mindful, healthy choices and create your new standard.

There is no universal truth when it comes to nutrition. Every body and every need is unique.

In this guide, we share our vision of nutrition and explain how you can apply it in your life, so you can work toward your health and vitality in a powerful and sustainable way.

Quick check: What is your main reason for reading this guide?

Reflection exercise

Write down what you hope to learn from this guide and how you can apply it in your daily life.

2. THE NUTRITION PYRAMID

The nutrition pyramid is your foundation for a healthy eating pattern and serves as the starting point of this Foodguide. From bottom to top, you'll see the different layers that together create a balanced and sustainable approach to nutrition. It's a tool that helps you gradually build your nutrition and habits step by step.

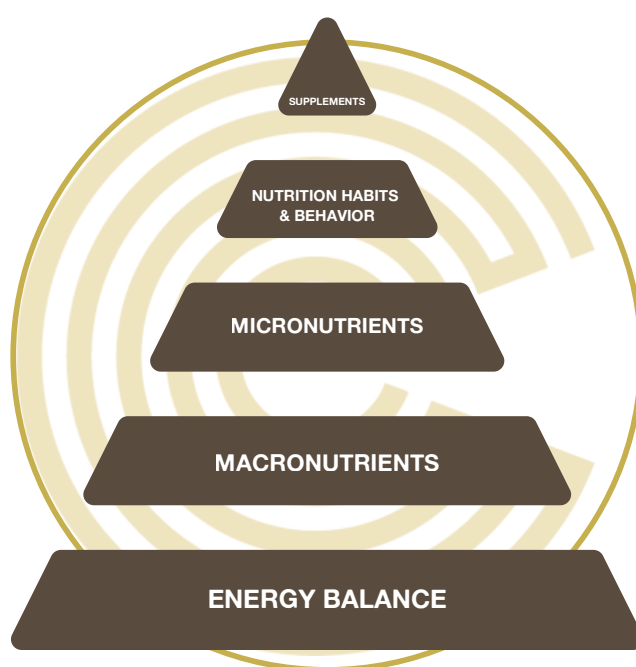
In the following chapters, we'll dive deeper into each layer. Each one has its own role: starting with the base, which covers energy balance (calories) and macronutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, fats), moving through micronutrients (vitamins, minerals, trace elements) and healthy habits, up to the top layer where supplementation provides additional support. Building it in layers makes it clear where to start and how to progress steadily toward improvement.

The concept behind the pyramid is simple: begin with a solid foundation and build from there, step by step. When your base is strong, making choices that support your goals and lifestyle becomes much easier. This approach gives you control over your nutrition and helps you create improvements that deliver lasting benefits. In this Foodguide, we provide the tools you need to strengthen and keep your eating habits for the long term.

Quick check: Which layer do you see as the biggest opportunity for making healthier choices for yourself?

Reflection exercise

Think about your current eating habits and lifestyle. Identify one layer of the pyramid where you see room for improvement, and write down a concrete example from your daily routine that you could adjust.



3. ENERGY NEEDS

In this chapter, we'll take a closer look at the concept of energy and what it means for our body. We'll explore how energy is produced and used, and we'll explain the connection with your BMR (Basal Metabolic Rate) and your daily energy requirements. This will give you a clear understanding of how much energy your body needs to function optimally, and how you can calculate and apply this in practice.

WHAT IS ENERGY?

The first question we answer is: What is energy? Energy is the fuel for our body. Everything we do, from breathing and thinking to moving and exercising, requires energy. This energy is measured in kilocalories (kcal) and is essential for our body to function properly. We use energy for the basic functions that keep us alive, such as breathing, digestion, and cell regeneration. In addition, energy is needed for any physical activity, whether it's walking, climbing stairs, or intense exercise.

You can think of your body as a motor or a battery. Just like a car needs fuel to run, or a battery needs to be charged to power devices, our body needs energy to function efficiently. The heavier or more intense the activity, the more fuel (kcal) is required.

Imagine a day when you haven't eaten much but decide to exercise anyway. There's a high chance you'll get tired faster and feel weaker than usual. This happens because your body doesn't have enough energy (kcal) available to optimally support both your basic functions and the extra physical effort.

WHAT IS BASAL METABOLIC RATE (BMR)?

A large part of our daily energy expenditure goes toward basal metabolism, also known as the Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR). This is the amount of energy your body uses at complete rest to keep all essential processes running, such as breathing, heart rate, and organ function.

Average BMR for men	Average BMR for women
± 1700-1900 kcal per day	± 1400-1600 kcal per day
Men generally have more muscle mass, which results in a higher energy use at rest.	Women typically have a higher body fat percentage and less muscle mass, which means their BMR is slightly lower.

Your BMR is influenced by several factors, including sex, age, weight, and body composition. For example, men generally have more muscle mass than women, which often results in a higher BMR. Muscle tissue burns more energy at rest than fat tissue. This means that two people with the same weight can still have different energy consumption at rest, depending on how much muscle mass they have.

YOUR DAILY ENERGY REQUIREMENT

To calculate how much energy your body needs each day, your BMR is multiplied by an activity factor, known as the PAL value (Physical Activity Level). This value reflects how active you are in your daily life and depends on your lifestyle and the intensity of your physical activity.

For example:

- For a sedentary lifestyle (office work, little movement), the PAL is around 1.3
- For a moderately active lifestyle (regular activity or light work), it ranges between 1.5 and 1.7
- For a very active lifestyle (intense exercise or heavy physical work), it ranges between 1.8 and 2.2

By combining your BMR with your activity level, you get a realistic picture of your total daily energy requirement. This helps you understand how much energy your body needs to stay healthy and balanced.

Our bodies are naturally designed to use fat as an important energy source. In ancient times, this was essential: periods of abundance were followed by periods of scarcity, so the body needed to efficiently switch between energy from food and energy from stored fat.

With our modern lifestyle, which includes lots of fast carbohydrates, snacks, and a constant supply of energy, this natural system often becomes unbalanced. The body becomes accustomed to relying primarily on sugars (glucose) for fuel, reducing its ability to burn fat effectively.

By adjusting your eating patterns, for example eating more mindfully, snacking less often, and balancing your meals, you can help your body learn to use fat as a primary energy source again. In chapters 8 and 9 we take a closer look into emotional eating and recognizing patterns in your eating behavior.

Quick check: How active are you on an average day? And what do you think your daily calorie needs are?

On average, you need to burn approximately 7,000 to 7,700 calories to lose one kilogram of body fat. This energy deficit can be achieved by increasing physical activity, reducing food intake, or a combination of both. To give you a better idea:

- One gram of fat contains about 9 kcal
- One gram of carbohydrates contains about 4 kcal
- One gram of protein contains about 4 kcal

These values provide an indication of the energy density of food. Keep in mind that these are averages. Everyone's energy expenditure differs due to body composition, metabolism, and activity level.

Reflection exercise

Use a BMR calculator to determine your own energy requirements. This will give you a concrete idea of how much energy your body needs each day based on your age, weight, height, and activity level.

Tip: use this helpful tool [BMR Calculator](#)

4. MACRONUTRIENTS

Your body runs on the energy and nutrients provided by the food you eat. Just as the choices you make in your work and personal life determine your performance, the same applies to what you eat. The three main macronutrients in our food are proteins, carbohydrates, and fats. Each has its own function. By understanding what these macronutrients do and how to make conscious choices about them, you can optimally support your energy, recovery, and focus.

PROTEINS

Proteins are an essential part of our nutrition and serve several crucial functions in the body. They contribute to the repair and building of muscle tissue, the production of enzymes and hormones, and play an important role in supporting the immune system. Because the body cannot store large amounts of protein, a daily intake is necessary for proper functioning. Proteins also provide a lasting feeling of fullness, which helps reduce hunger and the urge to snack between meals. This can be especially helpful if your goal is weight loss, which is discussed further in Chapter 6.

The recommended amount of protein depends on factors such as body weight, age, and personal goals, for example muscle growth or weight management. In general, the requirement ranges from 1.2 to 2.0 grams per kilogram of body weight per day. Athletes and people recovering from illness or injury often need more, while someone with a less active lifestyle may require less.

Examples of protein-rich foods include:

- Animal sources: chicken, beef, fish, eggs, milk, yogurt, and cheese
- Plant sources: lentils, chickpeas, beans, tofu, tempeh, nuts, and seeds

Quick check: Are you getting enough protein each day?

Reflection exercise

Use a nutrition app to track your own protein intake. Log it for a week and then calculate your average daily intake. This will help you discover whether you are consuming enough protein in relation to your personal needs.

Getting started with a nutrition app:

- Open the Virtuagym app
- Click on the “Voeding” icon
- Download the “Food” app
- Follow the steps and get started!

Tip: make it a habit to log your meals daily. This will give you insight into your eating patterns and make it easier to make adjustments as needed.

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, especially during intense physical activity. Some of the glucose derived from carbohydrates is used immediately for energy. Any excess is stored as glycogen in the liver and muscles. When these stores are full, the remaining glucose is stored as fat.

Not all carbohydrates are equally beneficial. Whole grains, vegetables, and fruits provide sustained energy, while refined sugars, such as those found in candy, cookies, and soft drinks, can cause rapid spikes and drops in blood sugar. This may lead to fatigue and cravings for sweet foods. In addition, there are fibers, a type of carbohydrate that the body cannot fully digest. They provide little energy but are important for digestion and gut health because they improve bowel movements, stimulate intestinal function, and feed beneficial gut bacteria. Fibers also help you feel full for longer, which can reduce snacking.

Examples of carbohydrate-rich foods include whole-grain bread, pasta, and rice, potatoes and sweet potatoes, legumes such as lentils, beans, and chickpeas, as well as oats and other grains.

Quick check: Can you identify where glycogen is primarily stored in your body?

Reflection exercise

Take a moment to reflect on your own energy levels throughout the day. Do you notice times when you crave quick sugars? Think about an energy slump in the afternoon, right after intense exercise, or during moments of stress. By paying attention to these patterns, you can better understand how your body responds to food and energy.

FATS

Fats are an important part of our nutrition and serve several functions in the body. They provide energy, support the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, and K), and are essential for hormone production and a healthy nervous system. Fat-soluble vitamins are absorbed along with fats and stored in the liver and fat tissue for later use. In contrast, water-soluble vitamins, such as vitamin C and the B vitamins, cannot bind to fat and therefore are not stored for long periods. Any excess is excreted through the urine.

Not all fats are equally beneficial for health. Unsaturated fats, found in nuts, fish, and plant-based oils, support a healthy heart and stable energy supply. Saturated fats, found in full-fat dairy, meat, and butter, can raise cholesterol levels if consumed in excess. Trans fats, which are mainly formed when oils are heated or fried, are the least healthy and can increase the risk of heart disease.

Examples of healthy fat sources include nuts and seeds, avocado, fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, and herring, olive oil, and other plant-based oils.

Quick check: Which sources of fat do you use most often, and are they healthy?

Reflection exercise

Which healthy fat source could you include more often this week? Think, for example, about a handful of nuts as a snack, avocado on your bread, or adding fatty fish to your dinner.

5. MICRONUTRIENTS

In addition to macronutrients (proteins, carbohydrates, and fats), your body also needs micronutrients to function properly. These include vitamins, minerals, and trace elements. Although you need much smaller amounts compared to macronutrients, they are essential for health and vitality.

Micronutrients play a role in countless processes in the body. They contribute to energy production, immune system function, bone health, and nerve signal transmission. A deficiency can lead to reduced resistance, fatigue, and, over time, health problems. Today, our food contains fewer micronutrients due to modern farming methods, processing, and longer storage, which can reduce nutritional value. For this reason, supplements are often recommended to help cover any gaps in vitamins and minerals.

Important supplements include:

- Vitamin D: supports the immune system, bone health, and muscle function. In the Netherlands, supplementation is often recommended, especially during the winter months
- Vitamin C: important for immunity, wound healing, and iron absorption
- Omega-3: promotes heart health and has anti-inflammatory effects. Found mainly in fatty fish, flaxseed, and walnuts
- Magnesium: supports nerve function, relaxation, and muscle recovery. Needs may increase during periods of stress or fatigue.

You can read more about this in Chapter 10, which discusses body signals and how to recognize them in cases of deficiency or excess.

Quick check: Which three micronutrients do you consider most important for your lifestyle?

Reflection exercise

Take a moment to reflect on your current eating habits and think about which micronutrients you might be getting too little of. This could be due to spending little time outdoors (vitamin D), eating few fruits and vegetables (vitamin C), or consuming little fatty fish and nuts (omega-3). Write down three micronutrients that you think you may not be getting enough of.

Myth or truth?

Myth (macronutrients): "Avoiding carbohydrates is the best way to lose weight."

Truth: Carbohydrates are an important source of energy. The quality and amount matter, not completely avoiding them.

Myth (micronutrients): "If you eat healthy, you don't need extra vitamins or minerals."

Truth: A healthy eating pattern is the foundation, but in most situations, such as limited sunlight, stress, or intense exercise, supplementation with certain micronutrients, like vitamin D or magnesium, may be necessary.



6. NUTRITION FOR WEIGHT LOSS AND MUSCLE BUILDING

Do you want to lose weight, build muscle, or simply become fitter and more energetic? Whatever your goal, it always starts with understanding your energy needs and adjusting your food intake accordingly. Broadly speaking, there are two main approaches you can follow: weight loss and muscle gain. While these goals are often combined, it is important to understand that they can sometimes work against each other. Losing fat requires a calorie deficit, meaning you consume less energy than you use, whereas building muscle requires a slight calorie surplus, meaning you consume more energy than you need.

It is possible to combine fat loss and strength gains, although progress is generally slower than when focusing on just one of these goals.

WEIGHT LOSS

If your goal is to lose weight, aim for a calorie deficit of about 10 to 20 percent compared to your energy balance. This deficit encourages your body to use stored fat as an energy source.

At the same time, it is crucial to consume enough protein, around 1.6 to 2.0 grams per kilogram of body weight, to preserve muscle mass.

Proteins are digested more slowly than carbohydrates and fats, helping you feel full for longer, reducing hunger, and making it easier to maintain a calorie deficit.

MUSCLE BUILDING

If your goal is to increase muscle mass, you need a small calorie surplus, around 5 to 15 percent above your energy balance. This surplus provides your body with extra fuel to repair and grow muscles.

Proteins also play a key role here, at around 1.6 to 2.2 grams per kilogram of body weight, complemented by sufficient carbohydrates and healthy fats to provide energy for your workouts and recovery.

Creatine can be a valuable addition to help increase strength, improve athletic performance, and support muscle growth. Tip: combining creatine with a protein-rich meal or shake can enhance absorption and maximize its effects.

What does this mean for you?

Decide for yourself what your main goal is: do you want to focus on fat loss or muscle gain first? Then fully commit to that goal and make choices that support it. Once you have reached this goal, you can always shift your focus to the next one.

Quick check: How could you make a small change in your daily routine to get closer to your goal, whether it's fat loss or muscle gain?

Reflection exercise fat loss

Choose one week and write down what you ate and drank each day. Then review it critically: where could you make a small adjustment, such as fewer snacks, smaller portions, or a healthier alternative, without feeling hungry?

Reflection exercise muscle gain

Choose one week and record your meals. Check whether there are enough protein sources, such as dairy, eggs, meat, fish, or legumes. Where could you add an extra protein-rich option to better support your muscle growth?

7. EATING HABITS AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

Everyone knows the yo-yo effect: you lose weight, but old habits remain, making the results short-lived. The first step to breaking this cycle is recognizing your own behavior. Change starts with becoming aware of your eating habits. Often, you think you know what you eat in a day, but in practice it can be different. By tracking your food in an app (see Chapter 4), you get a realistic picture of your calorie intake, the distribution of macronutrients, and areas for improvement. Simply keeping track of your meals already makes you more alert and helps you identify patterns, such as times when you reach for snacks more quickly.

A key tool for this is meal prepping: planning meals or snacks in advance. It doesn't have to be complicated; chop some extra vegetables in the evening for the next day, or prepare lunch over the weekend. This helps prevent turning to unhealthy choices during busy moments, as a healthy option is always ready. Your environment also plays a big role. Reduce temptations by keeping candy, chips, alcohol, or soft drinks out of sight or buying them less often. Encourage healthy choices by placing a bowl of fruit in a visible spot or putting vegetables at the front of the fridge. Small adjustments often make a big difference in what you reach for first.

Finally, sufficient sleep is an underestimated factor. A disrupted sleep rhythm can disturb your hormone balance, leading to stronger cravings for sugary foods. It also reduces energy and discipline to make healthy choices. A regular routine and 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night support both recovery and healthy eating habits.

In addition to these basics, here are some simple, practical tips you can apply immediately:

- Eat at the table without screens: by eating mindfully and without distractions from TV or phone, you become more aware of when you are full, which helps prevent unconscious snacking
- Use smaller plates: a smaller plate looks fuller, helping you eat less without feeling deprived
- Drink a glass of water before each meal: this helps distinguish between thirst and hunger and often leads to eating slightly less
- Eat until you are about 80 percent full, not completely full
- Make one healthy change per week: big changes are often hard to maintain. By taking a small step each week, you gradually build a lasting healthy routine

At COMMIT, our trainers support you not only during training but also with nutrition and lifestyle. We consider your body, behavior, and habits, and provide guidance with food where needed to help you reach your goals.

Quick check: Which current habit is standing in the way of reaching your nutrition goal the most?

Reflection exercise

Think of one new habit you want to implement this week. Write down why you are choosing this particular habit, what effect you hope to achieve, and how you plan to incorporate it into your daily routine. Also consider potential obstacles and note in advance how you will handle them.

8. EMOTIONAL EATING AND EMOTION REGULATION

Emotional eating means eating in response to feelings rather than physical hunger. This can involve negative emotions such as stress, boredom, or sadness, but also positive feelings such as happiness or a moment of reward, like a slice of cake at a birthday or a glass of champagne at a celebration. It is important to recognize the signals. These can include a sudden strong craving without actual hunger, a specific desire for high-calorie or sweet foods, or feelings of guilt afterward.

To manage these emotions without turning to food, you can use alternatives that help process your feelings in other ways. A short walk or a workout can release tension and boost energy. Breathing exercises or meditation promote calm and increase awareness of your emotions. It can also help to call someone or write down your feelings to create space in your mind. A personal “action plan” provides guidance: note what you can do when the urge to eat arises, so you are prepared for challenging moments.

Physical hunger is the body’s need for food, triggered by actual hunger or a lack of energy or nutrients. It is often accompanied by signals such as an empty stomach, stomach growling, dizziness, or low energy. Mental hunger (or emotional hunger) is the desire to eat that comes from your thoughts or feelings, not from real hunger. It often involves specific foods and can appear during boredom, stress, sadness, or out of habit.

Ways to become more aware of emotional eating:

- Keep a food journal including emotions: note not only what you eat but also how you felt at that moment. This helps reveal patterns and provides insight.
- Learn to distinguish between physical hunger and emotional cravings: ask yourself, does my body really need energy, or do I want to eat to cope with a feeling? This increases awareness.
- Take a 10-minute pause when cravings appear: give yourself a short break before eating. Often, the emotion subsides, allowing you to make a more conscious choice about what you really need.
- Find a healthy distraction that brings you joy: think of a hobby, listening to music, or a short activity that shifts your focus. This helps you regulate emotions without relying on food.

Quick check: Which emotion most often triggers your urge to eat? Think, for example, of stress, boredom, anger, or even happiness.

Reflection exercise

Choose a recent situation in which you noticed that you ate in response to emotion rather than true hunger. Briefly describe what happened: which emotion did you feel, how did it show up in your eating behavior, and how did you feel afterward? Then reflect on what you could do differently next time. Which strategy could you use to manage that emotion, such as physical activity, relaxation exercises, or finding a distraction? Write this down so you are prepared if a similar situation arises again.

9. EARLY LIFE INFLUENCES, HABITS AND EATING PATTERNS

Our first eating habits often develop in childhood and are strongly influenced by the environment we grow up in. Common eating rules, such as “finish your plate,” shape how we view food. Using sweets as a reward can also link food to emotions. In addition, we learn a lot through modeling: parents and caregivers often unconsciously show how and what to eat, which later forms the basis of our own habits.

Social situations also play a big role in our eating habits. Think of cake at a birthday, a drink after a football match at the club, or feeling like you have to take something because “everyone else is.” Peer pressure and FOMO (fear of missing out) can lead us to eat or drink not because we truly need it, but to feel included. Sometimes you even hear the familiar phrase, “Come on, join us.” It’s important to set your own boundaries, because if you don’t, others will easily cross them.

Many of our eating patterns are created through routine and fixed moments. You might notice that you automatically reach for snacks while watching TV, or that stress makes you snack more. These habits often feel automatic but are actually learned behavior. The good news is that you can change them step by step. By recognizing and consciously breaking patterns, you can build new, healthier habits that better align with your goals.

Practical tips:

- Eat mindfully, without distractions: sit at the table and put all screens away. By eating more consciously, you notice sooner when you are full and enjoy your meal more.
- Build new routines: plan regular eating times and choose consistent places to eat. This creates structure and helps prevent mindless snacking.
- Link healthy habits to existing ones: attach new habits to things you already do, such as drinking a smoothie after your workout. This makes them easier to maintain.
- Be patient: behavioral change takes time and repetition. Give yourself the time to change and celebrate the small successes along the way.

Quick check: Which eating habit from your childhood do you still recognize in your daily life?

Reflection exercise

Choose one habit from your childhood and think about how you could adapt it to better fit your current life and goals. Describe the step you could take to make this change and the benefit it would bring you.

Myth or Truth?

Myth: “Snacking while watching TV or when stressed means you lack discipline.”

Truth: Automatic snacking is often a habit that develops over time, for example from reward or routine, and does not reflect your willpower. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward change.

10. BODY SIGNALS

Your body is smarter than you think and constantly gives signals about your health and nutrition. Signs such as fatigue, dry skin, or low energy can indicate a deficiency, while excesses can lead to issues like digestive problems or weight gain.

By recognizing these signals, you learn to identify patterns and make better choices for your nutrition and health. A healthy eating pattern requires the right balance: too little can cause problems, while too much can also create issues. Below, you'll find the most common signs of deficiencies and excesses of key nutrients.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy, especially for your brain and muscles. They are broken down into glucose, which provides immediate energy or is stored as glycogen.

- **Deficiency:** You may feel weak and fatigued, get hungry more quickly, or sometimes feel lightheaded. Athletic performance can decline rapidly.
- **Excess:** Too many carbohydrates can cause blood sugar fluctuations, leading to energy dips after meals. Surplus carbohydrates are stored as fat, which can lead to weight gain.

Proteins

Proteins are the building blocks of the body. They are needed for muscle growth and repair, the production of enzymes and hormones, and a properly functioning immune system.

- **Deficiency:** Can lead to muscle breakdown, slower recovery after exercise, and fatigue. In the long term, the immune system may weaken.
- **Excess:** High intake may cause digestive discomfort (such as bloating), but no harmful effects have been shown in people with healthy kidneys.

Fats

Healthy fats are important for the absorption of vitamins (A, D, E, K), hormone balance, and brain function.

- **Deficiency:** Can lead to dry skin, hormonal issues, or concentration problems, since fats are essential for hormone production and brain function.
- **Excess:** Can cause weight gain and increased cholesterol, which raises the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Vitamin D

Supports bone health, muscle function, and the immune system. It is partly produced by sunlight and partly obtained from food.

- **Deficiency:** Symptoms such as fatigue, muscle weakness, reduced immunity, and low mood are common, especially in winter months.
- **Excess:** Rare, but can cause nausea, headaches, and thirst. High intake may lead to calcium buildup, increasing the risk of kidney stones for example.

Magnesium

Magnesium is important for muscle and nerve function, relaxation, and energy production.

- **Deficiency:** Can cause muscle cramps, restlessness, and sleep problems.
- **Excess:** Can cause diarrhea, nausea, and low blood pressure. In extreme cases, cardiac arrhythmia is possible.

Vitamin C

Plays an important role in immune function, wound healing, and iron absorption. It is a powerful antioxidant that protects your cells.

- Deficiency: Can lead to reduced immunity, slower wound healing, and in severe cases, bleeding gums.
- Excess: Usually excreted in urine, but high doses can cause digestive discomfort such as diarrhea or stomach pain.

Vitamin B (especially B12)

B vitamins support energy production and nerve function. Vitamin B12 is particularly important for the production of red blood cells and the proper functioning of the nervous system.

- Deficiency: Often shows as tingling, memory problems, and fatigue. Long-term deficiency can lead to anemia.
- Excess: Rare, but extremely high supplementation can cause skin issues (acne, rosacea) or nervousness.

Omega-3

Omega-3 fatty acids are important for heart and brain health and help reduce inflammation. They are mainly found in fatty fish and plant sources like flaxseeds and walnuts.

- Deficiency: Can cause dry skin, inflammatory responses, and mood changes.
- Excess: Can thin the blood and increase the risk of bleeding, and sometimes cause digestive discomfort.

Iron

Iron is needed to produce hemoglobin in red blood cells, which carries oxygen throughout the body.

- Deficiency: Can lead to paleness, dizziness, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Severe deficiencies can cause anemia.
- Excess: Can cause digestive discomfort, and long-term high levels may lead to joint pain and liver damage.

Creatine

Creatine plays a role in muscle energy supply and can support athletic performance. It is partly produced by the body and partly obtained from food.

- Deficiency: Rare in a normal diet, but vegetarians and vegans may benefit from supplementation.
- Excess: Not harmful for healthy kidneys, though digestive discomfort or water retention may occur.

Supplements can help address deficiencies but are intended as a complement, not a replacement, for a healthy diet. When using supplements, pay attention to dosage, composition, and brand reliability. Prefer supplements that are certified, free of unnecessary additives (such as sugars or fillers), and from suppliers who disclose their source. When in doubt, you can always ask one of our trainers at the club for advice.

Additional for vegetarians and vegans

For vegetarians and vegans, there are a few nutrients that deserve special attention:

- Vitamin B12: supplementation is always essential for vegans, as it is not naturally present in plant-based foods
- Iron: plant-based sources such as beans, lentils, and whole grains are absorbed more effectively when combined with vitamin C
- Omega-3: choose algae oil or plant-based sources like flaxseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts.
- Protein: combine different plant-based protein sources, such as legumes and grains, to create a complete amino acid profile



11. WATER AND ALCOHOL

Your body is made up of water primarily, so it's no surprise that staying properly hydrated is essential for your health, energy, and performance. While water helps your body function and recover, alcohol often works against you: it provides calories without nutrients and can interfere with recovery processes. In this chapter, we explore the role of both beverages and what they mean for your lifestyle.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER

Water is vital for almost every process in your body. It supports digestion, helps transport nutrients and energy, and regulates body temperature. Water also plays an important role in concentration and athletic performance. A practical guideline is 30 to 40 milliliters of water per kilogram of body weight per day. For someone weighing 70 kilograms, this equals 2.1 to 2.8 liters. On hot days or during intense exercise, you need more to compensate for fluid loss through sweat.

Drinking too little water can cause headaches, fatigue, dark urine, and decreased performance. Staying properly hydrated is therefore a simple but powerful way to support your energy, health, and performance.

THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Alcohol contains 7 kcal per gram but provides no beneficial nutrients, making it a true “empty calorie.” In addition, alcohol has both direct and indirect negative effects on your health and performance:

- It disrupts sleep and reduces the effectiveness of recovery;
- It can hinder muscle growth and fat metabolism, potentially slowing your fitness progress;
- It affects hormone balance and can lower energy levels;
- It increases the likelihood of overeating or making less healthy choices, as inhibitions are reduced.

While an occasional drink can fit into a social and healthy lifestyle, it's important to be aware of these effects so you can make informed choices about how often and how much you drink.

Quick check: What role does alcohol currently play in your daily routine?

Reflection exercise

You've just considered how alcohol affects your everyday life. Do you notice it impacting your eating habits, energy levels, or motivation to exercise? Describe one situation where this became clear to you. Then think about how you could change this pattern or approach it more consciously, for example, by choosing alcohol-free alternatives more often or scheduling regular “alcohol-free days.”

12. READING FOOD LABELS

Reading labels is a useful way to better understand what's in your food. Labels provide information about nutritional value, portion size, and ingredients, helping you make more conscious choices. Sometimes, however, all the information can feel a bit overwhelming. Fortunately, there are a few simple points that make it easier to navigate.

Start by looking at the energy content (kcal) per 100 grams or milliliters. This makes it easier to compare products, since portion sizes are often different. Other key points to consider when reading labels include:

- **Proteins:** Support recovery and help you feel full. Check the grams of protein per portion to see if the product contributes meaningfully to your daily needs.
- **Sugars:** Pay attention to “of which sugars” and check whether added sugars are listed in the ingredients.
- **Fats:** Be mindful of saturated fats, which are less beneficial in high amounts, while unsaturated fats offer health benefits.
- **Fibers:** Support digestion and help you stay full for longer.

Tip: The ingredients list is always in order of quantity. If sugar or refined flour is listed at the top, it's a main component of the product. Shorter, more recognizable ingredient lists usually indicate less processed foods. With these guidelines, reading labels becomes much easier, allowing you to choose products that fit your goals and lifestyle.

Now that you know what to look for when reading labels, it's time to put the theory into practice. In the table below, we compare the key nutritional values of Arla Skyr Natural, Campina Strawberry Yogurt, and AH Full-Fat Natural Yogurt. This allows you to quickly see how these products differ in terms of calories, sugar, fat, and protein.

Per 100 g	Arla Skyr Naturel	Campina Strawberry Yoghurt	AH Full-Fat Natural Yoghurt
Calories	64 kcal	97 kcal	120 kcal
Sugar	3.8 g	12.5 g	4.2 g
Protein	10 g	4.2 g	3.5 g
Fat	1 g	1 g	6 g

Arla Skyr Natural stands out for its high protein content and low fat and calorie levels. This makes it ideal for people looking to build muscle or those who are mindful of their calorie intake, for example when aiming to lose weight. The combination of high protein and low fat also helps you feel full for longer.

Campina Strawberry Yogurt is notable for its relatively high amount of added sugars. While it is naturally tasty, this makes it less suitable as a daily staple for a healthy diet. It is more of a treat than a nutritious option.

AH Full-Fat Natural Yogurt has a creamier texture and contains more fat and calories than the other two products. This makes it a good choice for people who need extra energy, for example during intense exercise or with a high energy requirement, but less suitable if you are trying to limit your calorie intake.

In the table below, we compare the key nutritional values of Kellogg's Choco Pops, Quaker Oatmeal, and Quaker Cruesli Protein, so you can easily see the differences between them.

Per 100 g	Kellogg's Choco Pops	Quaker Oatmeal	Quaker Cruesli Protein
Calories	379 kcal	366 kcal	395 kcal
Sugar	35 g	1 g	14 g
Fiber	3 g	10 g	6 g
Protein	6 g	11 g	20 g
Fat	2.5 g	7 g	10 g

Kellogg's Choco Pops stand out for their high sugar content and low levels of fiber and protein. This makes them more suitable as a treat rather than a nutritious breakfast to start your day.

Quaker Oatmeal, on the other hand, is high in fiber and very nutritious. It provides long-lasting satiety and a steady supply of energy, making it an excellent choice for a healthy breakfast.

Quaker Cruesli Protein is notable for its high protein content (20 g per 100 g) and moderate sugar levels. This makes it a good option for athletes or anyone looking to increase their protein intake. However, it is slightly higher in calories due to its fat content, making it less suitable for those who are mindful of calorie intake.

Quick check: What do you look at first when reading a food label?

Reflection exercise
 Choose three products you use regularly and compare their labels. Pay attention to the ingredients, nutritional values, and portion sizes. What differences do you notice, and what do they mean for your choices? How could you use this information to make more conscious decisions about your food?

13. NUTRI-SCORE

When you're in the supermarket, it can be challenging to determine which products are healthier than others. Packaging is often filled with numbers, percentages, claims, and long ingredient lists. It takes time and attention to compare everything carefully, a luxury you usually don't have while shopping.

To help with this, the Nutri-Score was developed: a clear and accessible food labeling system that shows at a glance how a product scores in terms of nutritional value. The label uses colors from dark green to red and letters from A to E, where A/dark green represents a healthier choice within a product category, and E/red indicates a less healthy option.

How is the score determined?

The Nutri-Score is based on a scientific algorithm that assigns points per 100 grams or 100 milliliters of a product, allowing for fair comparisons within the same category. Both negative and positive factors are taken into account. Products receive points for less healthy ingredients such as sugar, saturated fat, salt, and calories. At the same time, they can earn points for beneficial elements like fiber, protein, vegetables, fruit, legumes, and nuts.



How to use the Nutri-Score in practice?

The Nutri-Score is a helpful tool, not a replacement for reading the full label. However, it can save you a lot of time while shopping. Below you will find some practical examples of how to interpret the score.

Examples:

- Breakfast cereals: Sugary cornflakes often receive a Nutri-Score of D, while whole-grain muesli without added sugar may score a B or even an A.
- Beverages: Water and unsweetened tea get an A, while sugary soft drinks such as cola or orange soda almost always receive an E. Diet soft drinks usually fall in B or C because they contain fewer calories but also fewer nutrients.
- Dairy: Low-fat natural yogurt can receive an A because it is low in sugar and fat but provides protein. Full-fat fruit yogurt with added sugars often scores lower, for example a C or D, due to the added sugars and higher fat content.
- Pasta sauce: One sauce may receive a B because it contains lots of tomatoes and little sugar, while another scores D due to high sugar and salt content. Choosing the B option allows you to make a more conscious and healthier choice.

In addition to the practical examples, we also share useful tips you can apply in the supermarket, helping you make more conscious choices while shopping.

Practical tips:

1. Compare within the same product category. It doesn't make sense to compare chips with yogurt, but it does to compare different types of chips or different kinds of yogurt. For example, plain chips often score a C, while vegetable chips or baked chips sometimes score a B. This way, you can quickly see which option is better.
2. Use it as a quick filter. When you are in front of a shelf with breakfast cereals, first look for products with an A or B score and choose from those.
3. Stay critical. A product with a Nutri-Score A can still contain ingredients you might want to avoid, such as artificial sweeteners. The score provides a general guideline, but it is still useful to check the label yourself.

In short, the Nutri-Score gives you a quick summary of a product's nutritional value. By using it wisely, it can save you time and help you make healthier choices step by step during your daily shopping.

Quick check: Do you already use the Nutri-Score when making food choices?

Reflection exercise

Pick one product in the supermarket and check its Nutri-Score. Does it match what you expected?

14. FROM PYRAMID TO PRACTICE

Now that you've read this guide, it's time to put the knowledge into practice. The goal is to make conscious choices and take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle.

It starts with the basics: a good balance of energy, macronutrients (carbohydrates, proteins, fats) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). This foundation is essential for your body to function optimally and supports your energy, recovery, and performance, both during exercise and in daily life.

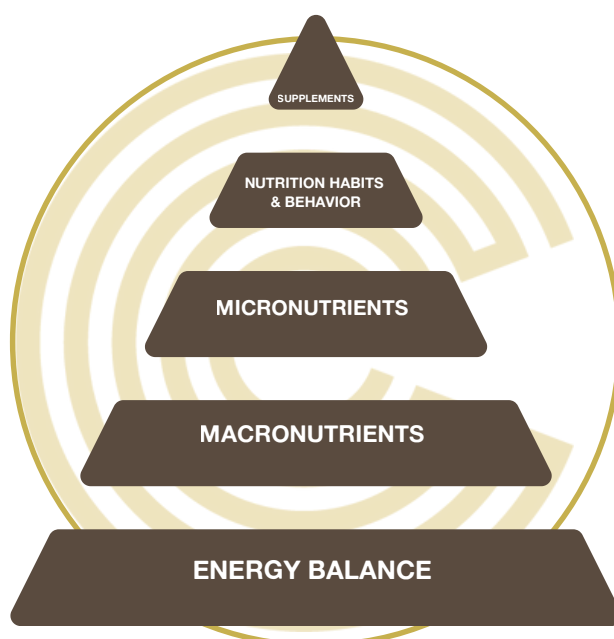
The pyramid helps you focus on what really matters. It shows that a healthy lifestyle isn't about supplements, trends, or quick fixes, but about building a strong foundation. By following the layers of the pyramid step by step and paying attention to the basic principles, you create a sustainable pattern that you can maintain over time. Think of the pyramid as a compass: start with the bottom layers, work your way up, and stay consistent with the process. This way, you gain control over your nutrition, make conscious choices, and build a healthy routine that supports your energy, recovery, and performance.

If you feel you need extra guidance after reading this foodguide, our trainers are happy to help. They can answer your nutrition questions and provide personalized advice tailored to your goals. Together, we can explore what you need to gradually get the best out of yourself.

Quick check: After reading the foodguide, which level of the pyramid do you feel you can improve the most? Compare this with the answer you gave at the beginning of the guide.

Reflection exercise

Think of a specific step you can take that aligns with the level of the pyramid where you have the most room for improvement. Describe exactly what you will do and how you will apply this in your daily life.



15. RECIPES

In this chapter, you will find some recipe ideas to help you eat healthy, tasty, and enjoyable meals. Besides these examples, you can also find many ideas on social media, from food influencers, cookbooks, and online platforms. There are plenty of recipes and tips that you can easily adjust to your goals and lifestyle. Let this chapter be a starting point, and add your own creativity and inspiration. This way, your eating pattern becomes healthy, effective, and fun to maintain.

OATMEAL WITH BANANA & NUTS

This oatmeal with banana and nuts is a nutritious and filling breakfast that gives you long-lasting energy. It is full of fiber, healthy fats, and natural sweetness. You will need the following ingredients:

WOMEN (±450 KCAL)

- Oatmeal: 50 g
- Semi-skimmed milk: 200 ml
- Banana: 100 g (½ medium banana)
- Walnuts: 15 g (3 pieces)
- Cinnamon: as desired
- Optional: blueberries (5 pieces)

MEN (±550 KCAL)

- Oatmeal: 70 g
- Semi-skimmed milk: 250 ml
- Banana: 150 g (1 medium banana)
- Walnuts: 20 g (4–5 pieces)
- Cinnamon: as desired
- Optional: blueberries (7 pieces)

Vegan tip: Use unsweetened soy milk instead of regular milk and replace the nuts with 10 g of flaxseeds.

Instructions:

- Bring the (plant-based) milk to a boil in a small saucepan
- Add the oats and cook gently for 3–5 minutes, stirring regularly
- Meanwhile, slice the banana
- Spoon the oats into a bowl, top with the banana slices and add the walnuts
- Sprinkle cinnamon on top to taste
- Add the blueberries



Preparation time: approx. 10 minutes



RECIPES

WRAP WITH CHICKEN AND HUMMUS

Looking for something quick but nutritious? This chicken and hummus wrap is ready in just a few minutes and combines protein with healthy fats. Tasty, fast, and nourishing all at once.

WOMEN (±500 KCAL)

- Whole wheat wraps: 2 pieces (120 g)
- Cooked chicken breast: 80 g
- Hummus: 30 g
- Fresh spinach: 30 g
- Bell pepper: 50 g

MEN (±650 KCAL)

- Whole wheat wraps: 2 pieces (120 g)
- Cooked chicken breast: 120 g
- Hummus: 40 g
- Fresh spinach: 40 g
- Bell pepper: 80 g

Vegan tip: replace the chicken with falafel (100 g for women / 150 g for men).

Instructions:

- Warm the wraps briefly in a dry pan or microwave until soft
- Spread a layer of hummus over each wrap
- Distribute the pieces of chicken evenly over the wraps
- Add the spinach and bell pepper for extra crunch and color
- Roll the wraps tightly and cut in half if desired



Preparation time: approx. 10 minutes



Fun fact

Meals high in protein help you feel full for longer. Protein slows down digestion and supports muscle recovery.

RECIPES

QUARK WITH STRAWBERRIES

A fresh and light way to start the day or a perfect snack in between: low-fat quark with strawberries. Packed with protein, full of flavor, and ready in just a few minutes.

WOMEN (±200 KCAL)

- Low-fat quark: 150 g
- Strawberries: 100 g
- Optional: unsalted nuts (15 g), seeds, or honey

MEN (±250 KCAL)

- Low-fat quark: 200 g
- Strawberries: 125 g
- Optional: unsalted nuts (20 g), seeds, or honey

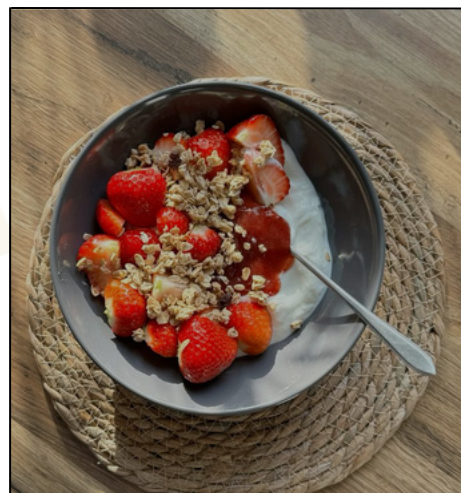
Vegan tip: replace the quark with unsweetened soy yogurt in the same amounts.

Instructions:

- Place the low-fat quark in a bowl
- Rinse the strawberries and remove the stems
- Slice or chop the strawberries
- Stir the strawberries into the quark or arrange them on top
- Optional: sprinkle with unsalted nuts, seeds, or a little honey



Preparation time: approx. 5 minutes



Fun fact

Dark chocolate (70% or higher) contains antioxidants and can be a healthy addition when enjoyed in small amounts.

RECIPES

SALMON WITH SWEET POTATO & BROCCOLI

A nutritious meal packed with protein and healthy carbohydrates: tender salmon served with sweet potato and broccoli, quick and easy to prepare.

WOMEN (±850 KCAL)

- Salmon fillet: 125 g
- Sweet potato: 200 g
- Broccoli: 200 g
- Olive oil: 15 g (1 tbsp)

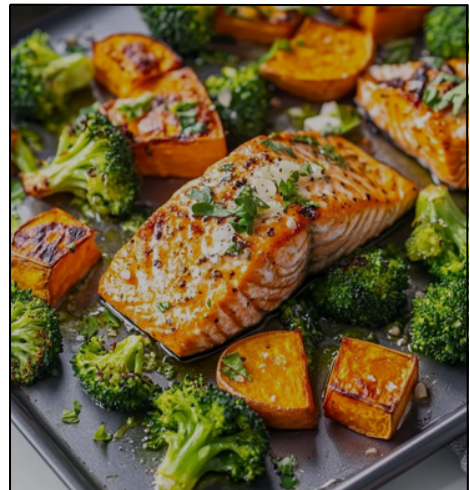
MEN (±1050 KCAL)

- Salmon fillet: 175 g
- Sweet potato: 250 g
- Broccoli: 250 g
- Olive oil: 20 g (1.5 tbsp)

Vegan tip: replace the salmon with tempeh (125 g for women / 175 g for men).

Instructions:

- Preheat the oven to 200°C
- Peel the sweet potato and cut into cubes. Drizzle with 1/2 tablespoon olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and roast in the oven for 20 minutes
- Cut the broccoli into florets and steam for 5–7 minutes until tender but still crisp
- Brush the salmon fillet with the remaining olive oil, season with salt and pepper, and bake in the oven for 12–15 minutes (depending on thickness)
- Place the salmon on a plate, add the roasted sweet potato and broccoli, and serve immediately



Preparation time: approx. 30 minutes

Fun fact

Omega-3 fatty acids from fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, herring) support brain function and heart health



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