



Leaning Into Health: How to Build and Maintain Muscle

Building and maintaining lean body mass is the key to improving body composition.¹ Lean body mass refers to the weight of everything in your body except fat, and it includes muscles, bones, organs, and fluids. A higher percentage of lean mass contributes to improved metabolism, better overall physical function, and reduced risk of chronic diseases.

Here are several effective strategies to help you build lean body mass:

- 1. Prioritize Strength Training:** Engage in resistance training exercises at least two to three times per week, focusing on compound movements that work multiple muscle groups, such as squats, deadlifts, and bench presses. Then, gradually increase weights and reps to challenge your muscles. If you do not have equipment, many resistance exercises can be performed using your own body weight.
- 2. Optimize Nutrition:** Protein needs vary depending on your fitness goals, training routine, and health needs, so it is best to consult with a registered dietitian for specific recommendations. In general, consuming adequate protein—about 0.8–2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight per day—supports muscle repair and growth.² To determine kilograms, take your body weight in pounds and divide by 2.2. Include a variety of protein sources such as lean meats, fish, dairy, legumes, and plant-based options.
- 3. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day to support metabolic and muscle functions. Also consider hydration before, during, and after engaging in physical activity, especially when exercising in hot or humid conditions.
- 4. Limit Alcohol and Junk Food:** Avoid alcohol, ultra-processed foods, refined carbohydrates, sugary foods and beverages, and other junk foods, as these can slow muscle building.³
- 5. Get Enough Sleep and Rest:** Adequate rest between workouts is essential for building lean body mass. Aim for 7–9 hours of quality sleep each night to allow for adequate muscle recovery. If muscle soreness interferes with sleep, try foam rolling, stretching, or other relaxing mobility exercises to improve sleep quality.
- 6. Consult Professionals:** If you are unable to make progress on your own, consider working with a certified personal trainer to develop a customized exercise program, or speak with a registered dietitian to ensure your nutrition habits support your fitness goals.

Building and maintaining lean muscle mass can help optimize your metabolic health. Be thoughtful about how you nourish your body, include strength training exercises on 2 to 3 days of the week, and be consistent with your workout routine.

1. Verywell Fit. Body Composition: What It Is and Why It Matters. Accessed November 7, 2024. <https://www.verywellfit.com/what-is-body-composition-3495614>
2. Jäger R, Kerksick CM, Campbell BI, et al. International Society of Sports Nutrition Position Stand: protein and exercise. *J Int Soc Sports Nutr.* 2017;14:20. Published 2017 Jun 20. doi:10.1186/s12970-017-0177-8
3. NASM. Alcohol and Muscle Growth: How it Affects Muscular Development. Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://blog.nasm.org/does-alcohol-affect-muscle-growth#:~:text=%231%20Alcohol%20Disrupts%20Protein%20Synthesis&text=To%20BUILD%20muscle%2C%20we%20need,the%20body%20to%20build%20muscle>



9 Habits for Healthy Routines

Establishing and maintaining healthy routines can help you stay on track with your health goals. By implementing structured, daily practices, you can be more productive without compromising your health. Below are some habits to consider as you aim to integrate healthy routines into your daily life.^{1,2}

- 1. Movement:** Move your body throughout the day. For example, start the day with a full-body workout, take a walk after lunch, and finish the day with a 5-minute chair yoga routine.
- 2. Hydration:** Adequate hydration is essential for optimal cognitive function and overall health. Fill a water bottle in the morning and set a goal to refill at specific times and take small sips throughout the day.
- 3. Stretching:** Spend five to ten minutes each morning doing light stretches. This promotes increased flexibility, reduces muscle tension, and energizes you for the day ahead.
- 4. Meditation:** Dedicate a few moments to mindful meditation. Focus on your breathing and clear your mind during the midday hours, or whenever you need to destress.³
- 5. Journaling:** Write down your thoughts, goals, or things you are grateful for. This practice enhances mental clarity and fosters a positive mindset.
- 6. Nourishment:** Prepare nutritious meals and snacks to fuel your body and boost energy levels. Plan your menus in advance to avoid the temptation of choosing unhealthy alternatives.
- 7. Relaxation:** Dim the lights, play soft music, or use aromatherapy to relax at the end of the day. A soothing atmosphere can help release tension and stress and signal to your body that it is time to wind down.
- 8. Reading:** Choose an enjoyable book to stimulate creativity. Reading can serve as an excellent escape and helps transition your mind away from the day's stresses.
- 9. Reflection:** Before bed, take a moment to reflect on your accomplishments and note any challenges you faced. This practice can help clear your mind before sleep.

Weaving self-care routines into your daily life can bring many health benefits in the long term. Healthy habits take time, so prioritize your health goals and start with one area of your life at a time.

1. American Heart Association. How to Establish a Wake-up Routine for a Good Morning Every Morning. Accessed November 2, 2024. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/sleep/how-to-establish-a-wakeup-routine-for-a-good-morning-every-morning>
2. Calm. How to build a daily routine: 10 habits for a productive day. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://www.calm.com/blog/daily-routine>
3. Harvard Health Publishing. You can practice mindfulness in as little as 15 minutes a day. Accessed November 7, 2024. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/you-can-practice-mindfulness-in-as-little-as-15-minutes-a-day>



Small Adjustments, Big Results

Fine-tuning your existing daily routines can change the course of your health. Small changes are helpful because they typically do not disrupt your normal routines. Many are barely noticeable, yet can bring significant results over time.

Here are some effective ways to make small changes to your daily habits:^{1,3}

- **Stack Your Habits:** James Clear, author of *Atomic Habits*, encourages habit stacking, which involves pairing a new habit with a habit you already do each day.² For example, pair a new morning habit with something you already do daily, such as brushing your teeth.
- **Start Your Day with Hydration:** Begin each morning by drinking a glass of water. This simple habit can kickstart your metabolism, improve digestion, and help you stay hydrated throughout the day.
- **Incorporate Movement:** Look for opportunities to move your body throughout the day, even if only for a few minutes. Whether you take a stroll during your lunch break or take a short stretch break at your desk, short bursts of activity can boost your cardiovascular health and elevate your mood.
- **Out of Sight, Out of Mind:** Rearrange your fridge and pantry so better-for-you options are front and center, making healthy foods the easier choices.
- **Up Your Snack Game:** Prepare better-for-you snacks so they are as easy to grab as that bag of chips. Replace processed snacks with fresh fruits, nuts, or yogurt. The simple substitution of water for sugary drinks can have a big impact on your overall diet and health as well. Small dietary changes improve nutrition, help maintain energy levels, and prevent mid-afternoon slumps.
- **Practice Mindful Breathing:** Take a moment several times a day to practice deep, mindful breathing. This practice can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and improve mental clarity. Just a few minutes of deep breathing can help you manage stress more effectively.
- **Stay Socially Connected:** Make time for quality social interaction, whether it is a call, video chat, or getting together in person. Building and maintaining positive relationships can enhance your emotional health, provide emotional support, and improve your overall quality of life.

Health improvements do not happen overnight and they do require a long-term commitment to doing things differently, but making small changes can bring big results. The key to any behavior change is consistency.

1. American Heart Association. "How to Break Bad Habits and Change Behaviors." December 14, 2023. Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/mental-health-and-wellbeing/how-to-break-bad-habits-and-change-behaviors>
2. James Clear. "How to Build New Habits by Taking Advantage of Old Ones." Accessed November 12, 2024. <https://jamesclear.com/habit-stacking>
3. Medium. "100 tiny changes to transform your life: from the one-minute rule to pyjama yoga." January 1, 2024. Accessed November 2, 2024. <https://medium.com/personal-growth/micro-habit-stacking-25-small-changes-to-improve-your-life-f8cd344412d>

GRILLED CHICKEN QUINOA BOWL

Portion sizes may be adjusted to meet individual calorie and protein needs. This meal is well-balanced, containing a source of complex carbohydrates (quinoa), lean protein (chicken and chickpeas), healthy fats (avocado and olive oil), and an array of vitamins and minerals from the vegetables. The contents of the meal support muscle repair, energy needs for workouts, and overall health as outlined in the provided health tips for everyday life.

Ingredients

- 150g grilled chicken breast (seasoned with herbs)
- 1 cup cooked quinoa
- 1 cup steamed broccoli florets
- 1/2 avocado, sliced
- 1/4 cup roasted chickpeas
- A handful of mixed greens (spinach, arugula)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice (for dressing)
- 1 tbsp olive oil (for dressing)
- Salt and pepper (to taste)

Instructions

1. Cook the quinoa following the package instructions and set aside.
2. Grill the chicken breast seasoned with herbs until fully cooked.
3. Steam the broccoli florets until tender.
4. In a bowl, place the mixed greens at the bottom.
5. Add the cooked quinoa, grilled chicken, steamed broccoli, and sliced avocado on top of the greens.
6. Sprinkle the roasted chickpeas over the bowl.
7. Whisk together the lemon juice, olive oil, salt, and pepper, and drizzle over the bowl as a dressing.



Nutrition Facts

Calories: 650 kcal

Protein: 60 g

Total Fat: 24 g

Saturated Fat: 4 g

Monounsaturated Fat: 10 g

Polyunsaturated Fat: 3 g

Carbohydrates: 48 g

Dietary Fiber: 12 g

Sugars: 4 g

Sodium: 340 mg

Cholesterol: 125 mg

Vitamins and Minerals High in
Vitamins C, A, and iron



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Small Changes

Identify one small change you could make to your daily routine to improve one area of your health. Make a list of your top 3 health focus areas and map out a plan to make one small change that improves at least one of the areas. If you are ambitious, look for a change that positively impacts all 3 of your focus areas. Consider your less healthy habits and look for healthier alternatives.



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