Pillar 3

EAT TO WIN

At the Beijing Olympics, Ryan Lochte picked up a stomach bug. So to play it safe, he ate every subsequent meal at McDonald's. By the end of the Games, he'd gained 13 pounds of fat, despite burning 6,000-plus calories a day.

If you ever needed proof that you can't outtrain a bad diet, this is it. "I watch what I eat much more closely now," Lochte says. "If my abs start to disappear, I tweak my diet." / Research shows that many of us overestimate the number of calories we burn during exercise. For instance, in a 2010 University of Ottawa study, people who walked briskly for 30 to 45 minutes thought they'd burned at least 805 calories—three to four times the actual amount. They subsequently overindulged by 300 to 350 calories. / The point of exercise, of course, is to end up with a net energy deficit. That is, you want to burn more calories over each 24-hour period than you consume. But a long list of hormones and metabolic processes make that surprisingly difficult to pull off. Hunger, to our everlasting frustration, is an unreliable guide to how much energy the human body really needs. / If weight control is an issue, use a three-step process to figure out how much you're eating, how much you should be eating, and which times and circumstances are the most likely for imbalances to occur. / Step 1 is easy to describe, but difficult to pull off: Keep track of everything you eat—seriously, every bite—for at least 3 days. To figure out total calories and tally your daily average, use an app (try Lose It!) or an online calculator (try fitday.com). This drill works only if it includes typical workout and nonworkout days. / Step 2 is to estimate the calories you actually need. *MH* nutrition advisor Alan Aragon recommends this formula.

Don't work out? Multiply your body weight by 10. If you weigh 200 pounds, that's 2,000 calories a day.

Work out once or twice a week? Multiply your weight by 12. That's 2,400 calories for a 200-pound person.

Work out three or four times a week? Multiply by 14. Now we're up to 2,800 calories.

Work out five or more times a week? Multiply by 16, bringing the daily food up to 3,200 calories.

These are just estimates, Aragon says. Human metabolism is notoriously resistant to simple math. But we need to start somewhere, and Aragon's formula allows you to focus on how much you eat and burn in an average 24-hour day. This determines whether you end up with more body fat or less. / That brings us to Step 3: Figure out when, where, and how you can tweak your daily calories to create a bigger deficit. / The timing of your meals matters, but not for the reason you think. "Your nutrient timing should be personalized to whatever maximizes your training or doesn't hinder it," Aragon says. Training on an empty stomach might work for your buddy, but if hunger pangs derail your workout, you're better off with a light meal before hitting the gym. / That applies to postworkout nutrition as well. Aragon says that while short-term studies find that protein and carbs increase markers of muscle protein production, recent long-term research suggests that making sure you meet your daily needs for protein, fat, and carbs will benefit you more than a postworkout meal or protein shake. Of course, you can also do both!

22.7

NUMBER OF SECONDS IT TAKES RYAN LOCHTE TO SWIM 50 METERS UNDER WATER—TWO-TENTHS OF A SECOND FASTER THAN HE CAN SWIM IT WITH HIS HEAD ABOVE WATER—THANKS TO A POWERFUL BUTTERFLY KICK

LIFE CHANGERS! **Replace soda with spritzer** If you rely on a midafternoon soda, drink it—but resist all other soda cravings. Instead, swap in seltzer with a zipper of juice, and eventually you will kick your habit entirely, says Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., a Penn State professor of nutritional sciences.

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