

What Are Macronutrients?

Let's start at the most basic level.

Macronutrients are the basic building blocks for energy.

Macronutrients are:

- Carbohydrates
- Fats
- Protein
- Alcohol

These 4 "macros" combined are what make up your total calorie intake.

Carbohydrates – 4 calories /per gram

Protein – 4 calories /per g

Fats – 9 calories /per g

Alcohol – 7 calories /per g

For the sake of a simple example, let's say all you ate today was:

- 4 bagels (32g carb per bagel x 4 = 128g carb)
- 1 whole chicken breast (40g protein)
- and 1 beer (14g alcohol, 13g carbs)

Your total Macro intake for the day would be:

Carbs – 141g (141 x 4 calories = 564 calories)

Protein – 40g (40 x 4 calories = 160 calories)

Fat – 0g

Alcohol – 14g (14 x 7 calories = 98 calories)

Total calories = 822

Macros provide us with energy, they are in the food we eat and they all contain a certain amount of calories per gram consumed. Based on this knowledge, you can formulate your own meal plan by substituting and replacing foods where needed.

Example: You're going out for dinner to an Italian restaurant. You know there will be lots of pasta and bread (carbs). During the day, you will want to choose low carb foods, so that you can go to dinner and not worry about going way over your Macros.

How to Calculate Macros

Option 1: Figure out how many calories you're eating now. Keep a food journal for three days. Write down everything you eat and drink. Eat the same as you normally would, don't change anything. Then write down all the nutrition info – how many calories/protein/carbs/fat was in each meal, then total them up for the day. Use My Fitness Pal or Google to calculate. Include all fluids.

Option 2: Another (less accurate) method is to multiply your lean body mass (LBM) by 17 to get an estimate of your caloric intake. LBM is calculated by multiplying your body weight by your body fat percent, then subtract that number from your total bodyweight. This should give you an approximate number of calories needed to maintain your current weight. To lose weight - subtract 300-500 calories from this number.

Example

- Body Weight = 150lbs
- Body Fat Percent = 23% ($150 \times 0.23 = 34$ lbs of body fat)
- Lean Body Mass = 116 pounds ($150 - 34 = 116$ lbs)
- Baseline Calories = 1972 calories (116×17)

Let's use the following the calorie ratio of 40/40/20 - meaning 40% protein, 40% carbs, 20% fat.

- Total Baseline Calories = 1,972
- Total Daily Protein = 197g ($1,972 \times 0.40/4$ calories per gram)
- Total Daily Carbs = 197g ($1,972 \times 0.40/4$ calories per gram)
- Total Daily Fat = 43g ($1,972 \times 0.20/9$ calories per gram)

Then break it down into meals. Let's assume 5 meals per day.

Protein = 40g per meal (197g/5)

Carbs = 40g per meal (197g/5)

Fat = 9g or less per meal (43g/5)

From there you can make up your own meal plans and adjust your percentages based on what you feel and perform best with.