Strategies for Weight Gain

Why is weight management important?

Proper diet and a good conditioning program play a vital role in athletic performance. Athletes who are under their ideal playing weight will not perform as well as they might.

What about weight gain?

How many calories you need depends on your age, sex, weight, and activity level. To maintain your weight, you have to take in the same number of calories you burn. It takes about 3,000 calories a day for the average 165-pound man who is 19 to 24 years old to maintain his weight. From ages 25 through 49, the daily calorie requirement for maintenance drops to 2,700. An average 127-pound woman, 19 through 24 years old, will have to consume 2,100 calories daily for weight maintenance. From ages 25 through 49, it takes 1,900 calories per day. Your body weight will change when there is a difference between calories in and calories out.

To gain weight, athletes need to consume more calories than they expend. This sounds simple but may not be easy. Most research shows that it takes longer to gain weight than to lose it.

Since the goal is to increase muscle mass, be sure to increase your exercise level. Consuming more calories without exercise will increase body fat stores.

How many calories do I burn during exercise?

In planning your calorie needs, consult the following table. It gives the average calories burned for different activities. Multiply the number of calories burned per minute by the number of minutes that you exercise to get the number of calories you need to replace after exercise.

Calories Burned per Minute of Activity

120-lb person	160-lb person	200-lb person	Activity
2.5	3.4	4.6	Walking 2 miles an hour Bicycling 5 miles an hour
3.3	4.4	5.9	Walking 3 miles an hour Bicycling 6 miles an hour Badminton
5.1	6.8	9.0	Walking 4 miles an hour Dancing Calisthenics Bicycling 10 miles an hour Roller skating
6	8	10.6	Tennis (singles) Water skiing Basketball (recreational) Swimming (35 yards/minute)
6.5	8.7	11.6	Walking briskly 5 miles an hour
7.3	9.7	12.9	Jogging 5 miles an hour Bicycling 12 miles an hour
7.8	10.5	14.1	Downhill skiing Basketball (vigorous competition) Mountain climbing
9.2	12.3	16.4	Jogging 7 miles an hour Cross-country skiing Squash and handball
12.9	17.3	23.2	Running 9 miles per hour

From "The Ultimate Sports Nutrition Handbook" by Ellen Coleman and Suzanne Nelson Steen, Bull Publishing, 1996, Palo Alto, CA.

Family history plays a major role in an athlete's build. Athletes from naturally thin families are less likely to be able to transform their bodies from slight, slender figures to bulky, muscular ones. With improved diet and suitable weight training, however, they can increase their chances of gaining weight. Many people naturally gain weight as they age because their metabolism slows down.

What are the keys to gaining muscle mass?

Muscle mass can be gained through moderate to intense strength training several times each week, coupled with taking in extra calories.

For each pound gained as muscle in a week, you will need to consume about 500 extra calories each day. The extra calories should come from a variety of foods: milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, and grains.

The key is to be consistent. Eating three meals a day with snacks in between is an essential part of gaining lean body mass. If you sleep in and skip breakfast, you miss a chance to add extra calories to your diet.

Eat enough to satisfy your appetite and then try to eat a little more. This can be done by:

eating larger than normal portions
eating an extra snack or meal
drinking commercial liquid meals or milkshakes with regular meals or as snacks.

Some good snacks if you are trying to gain weight are:

- peanut butter sandwich
- low-fat milkshake (with skim milk and low-fat ice cream)
- dried fruit
- cottage cheese
- pasta with sauce.

Commercial protein supplements will not help you gain weight and will probably add too much protein to your diet. If you need a liquid supplement, make sure it provides the extra calories you need as carbohydrates, not protein.