The Six Pillars of Nutrition

1. **Eat 5 or 6 times a day** – If you are an active person, you may need more calories than the average person. You also can’t eat on the same schedule as an average person. In order to build muscle and strength and keep your metabolism functioning optimally, you are going to need to consume a substantial amount of calories. To do this effectively, the traditional three square meals a day won’t cut it. Instead, you will need to eat twice as often (5 or 6 times a day), consuming nutrient-rich meals every 2 to 3 hours. By eating this way, you will be constantly feeding your body the nutrients it needs to recover from workouts, build muscle, control blood sugar, and optimize performance. The larger you are, the more calories you need, the more meals you will need to consume. Adjusting the number of meals you consume in relation to the total number of calories you consume will allow you to continue eating reasonable portion sizes without overloading your body with too many calories at once.

2. **Limit your Consumption of Sugars and Processed Foods** – IF YOU COULD ONLY IMPLEMENT ONE CHANGE IN YOUR NUTRITIONAL PLAN, IT SHOULD BE TO LIMIT/ELIMINATE YOUR CONSUMPTION OF SUGARS AND PROCESSED FOODS. You will also ensure that you’re no longer eating other calorie-dense, nutrient-poor food such as chips, white bread, high-fat processed meats, cookies and French fries (to name a few). By cutting out processed food, you will also be forced to eat fresh, healthy, nutrient rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins. This is a phenomenon known as dietary displacement. Not only is consuming large amounts of sugar-filled processed foods unhealthy, but also by consuming those calories you prevent yourself from consuming wholesome unprocessed foods that will allow you to reduce your body fat, increase your strength, and build muscle – not to mention greatly improve your health.

3. **Eat Fruits and Vegetables throughout the day** – What makes fruits and vegetables such a valuable piece of your nutritional arsenal is that they are loaded with VITAMINS, MINERALS, PHYTOCHEMICALS, AND FIBER. Also their sheer bulk allows you to maintain a high level of satiety or fullness throughout the day while controlling your blood sugar and insulin levels.

   - If you were to ask most what is the most powerful hormone in the body is for building muscle, most would answer with testosterone. In fact, the correct answer is insulin – the most powerful promoter of protein synthesis. To control insulin is to control your body composition. The best part about insulin, unlike testosterone, is that you can completely CONTROL IT THROUGH YOUR DIET.
   - Insulin is a hormone released from your pancreas in response to increases in sugar and amino acid levels in your blood. Its main job is to get sugar and amino acids out of the bloodstream and into various tissues in the body.
4. **Drink more Water and cut out calorie containing beverages** – THE BEST PERFORMANCE-ENHANCING ‘DRUG’ OUT THERE. – Studies have shown that maintaining a proper level of hydration before, during, and after exercise helps maintain performance, lower exercising heart rate, reduce heat stress, and prevents drops in strength due to dehydration. IF YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT PERFORMING AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL POSSIBLE, YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE PROPERLY HYDRATED.

   - A good place to start is drinking a glass of water with each meal, one upon waking up, and one just before bed. Using these guidelines, you will be drinking seven to eight glasses a day easily.

   **Two Quick ways to ensure you are properly hydrated:**

   - Have two completely clear urinations each day
   - Never allow yourself to get thirsty. If you find yourself thirsty, you are already on your way to become dehydrated.

   **DO NOT OVER HYDRATE – THIS CAN LEAD TO ELECTROLYTE IMBALANCES IN YOUR BODY. THIS WILL LEAD TO A DECREASE IN PERFORMANCE, OR, WORSE YET, A TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL.**

5. **Focus on Consuming Lean Proteins throughout the day.** Consuming these:

   - Decreased Insulin response – Increasing your consumption will mean that you will have to displace other foods form your diet. This displacement normally comes at the expense of carbohydrates, and protein can be a beneficial replacement because it stimulates much less insulin than carbohydrates.
   - Increased thermic effect of food – When you eat food, it “costs” your body energy to break down, digest, and turn it into an energy source it can use. This caloric cost is called the thermic effect of food (TEF). Protein has a higher TEF than either carbohydrate or fat. This added TEF will help boost your metabolism – always a good thing
   - Increased protein synthesis – IN addition to being the building blocks of muscle, certain amino acids, such as leucine, can turn on and regulate genes in your body associated with protein synthesis and muscle growth.

6. **Save Starch-containing foods until after a workout or for Breakfast** – Starch carbohydrates are food such as grains, potatoes, corn, or sugar. When these foods are eaten, they cause a relatively fast increase in blood sugar levels. Because these carbohydrates are easily consumed in larger quantities, they can also stimulate insulin to a greater degree than fruits and vegetables. Starchy carbohydrates are generally carbohydrates that have a high to medium glycemic index rating. The glycemic index is a number given to carbohydrates, on a scale to 1 to 100, rating them on a how quickly the sugars from carbohydrates enter the bloodstream. The faster sugars enter your system, the higher the glycemic index and the faster your blood sugar levels will go up. Keeping blood sugar levels under control and at a consistent level has been a theme throughout this chapter, but there are certain times when increases in blood sugar levels and insulin are beneficial – in the morning during your workouts are two of these times.