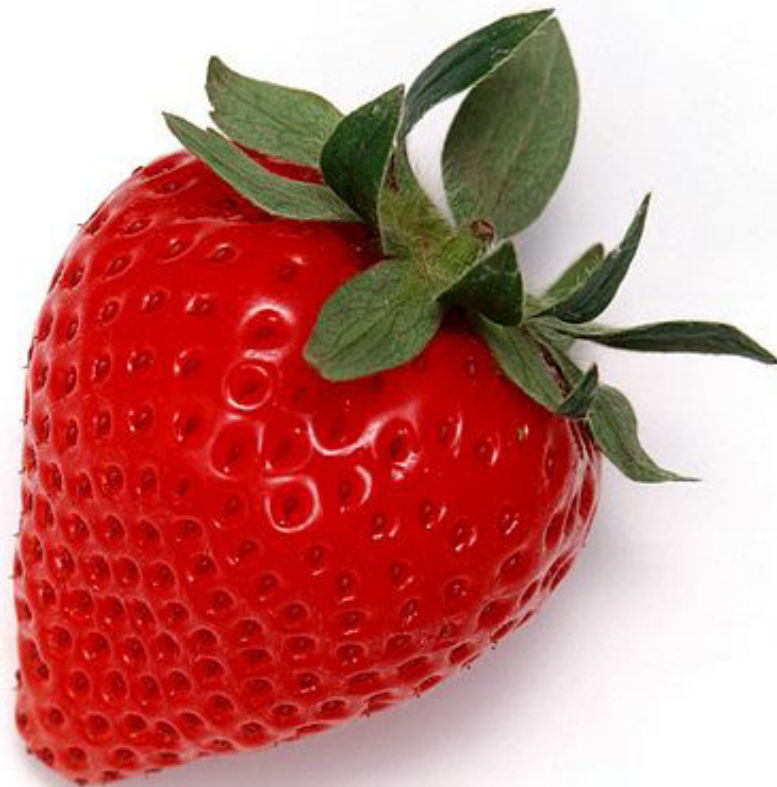




Fat Girl PhD

Exercise Programme



Ascenté
HEALTH FOR LIFE

About **Fat Girl** PhD

Hello! My name's Katie Lowe, and I write Fat Girl, PhD – a blog about healthy living, wellbeing and happiness.

Fat Girl, PhD started in April 2012, but my journey started a long time before that. You see, I've always been the fat girl. Always. It's just how I roll. But when I had an accident in 2007, I couldn't walk for a number of years, and the weight piled on. Combined with an unhappy relationship and even unhappier breakup, I found myself at **290lbs in August 2010**.

Over the last two years, I've lost over 130lbs through a programme of diet and exercise designed by health and wellbeing badass **Matt Peacock, owner of Ascenté Health for Life**. Which is pretty exciting, I think you'll agree.

But the thing is – **it's not just about weight loss**. If it'd been all about weight loss, I don't think I'd have seen anywhere near this sort of success. No – this is about wellbeing, and happiness. Two things that are far, far more important than any number, on any scale.

Now, admittedly, my blog started off as a way to **make myself accountable** – because if my friends were reading about my weight loss, I could hardly sit in the office and work my way through a round of sausage sandwiches and cake. But since August 2012, it's been linked to from major American websites including the Huffington Post and MindBodyGreen, and my weight loss story has appeared in the UK press in the MailOnline, The Sun Online, and both the online and print editions of The Daily Star.

Since then, I've been completely inspired by the messages I've had from people all over the globe, who've **lost weight and found happiness** because they've read the blog. Nothing makes me happier – or blows my mind more!

This exercise programme, then, is designed to help you to see the same results that I did. But I'd like to preface this, clearly, with the fact that this programme isn't a diet, **it isn't a quick fix** – and it isn't just a "diet programme." It's about changing your entire attitude towards yourself, both in mind and body.

That said, there's actual science behind every step of the programme. **A lot of science**. Matt's been researching this for over four years, and he's seen significant results with people who are older, infirm, or morbidly obese, as well as those just looking to lose a small amount of weight or improve their levels of fitness.

And he's painstakingly had to explain the science to me. I'm a **PhD student in modernist literature**. I work in marketing. Science isn't exactly my forte, so this really had to be simple.

And it was. It's this simple, in fact: it's a balanced diet and exercise. But in a very specific, controlled way that gets the best results for **burning fat, and increasing muscle**. Not only that, but it offers a working alternative that means expensive, intrusive surgery doesn't have to be the only option for people who are severely overweight or disabled. It gives people the chance to make their own decisions, and improve their own quality of life – whilst not only offering a cure for their weight issues, but improving their psychological wellbeing too.

My blog has become something far bigger than I ever thought it would be – but I'm convinced that this programme is something that really can **make a difference**. And that's why I'm sharing it with you.

If you've got any questions, or you'd like more information on Fat Girl, PhD, you can find me on Facebook and Twitter – and for all enquiries, please contact me at fatgirlphd@gmail.com.

So... Let's get started!



(Me!)

Where Do I **Start?**

The starting line can be a scary place - especially if, like me, you've tried and failed at diets before. So the very first thing you need to do is [stop thinking of this as a diet](#). It's not.

Nope - this is a [lifestyle change](#). And that's something very different.

A lifestyle change is a [permanent](#) thing. That's you going up to the mirror and saying, 'you - enough. Put the damn cookie down. I've got life-changing to do.'

This does mean, unfortunately, that there are a lot of different facets to it that you have to address. [Diet and nutrition](#) are one piece of the puzzle; [physical activity](#) is another. Then, there are the practicalities - how much time, energy, and resources can you commit to changing your life?

Most importantly, though, there's the [psychological](#) side of it.

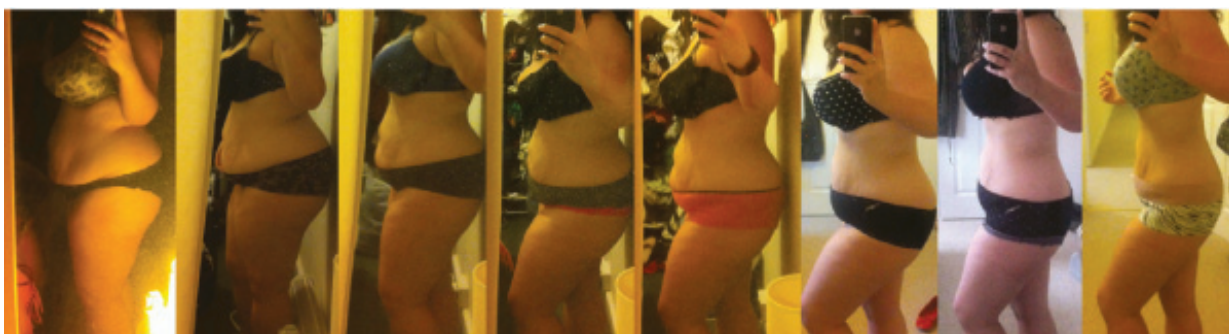
Everyone's got their own reasons for being overweight. There's no doubt that the reasons I hit 290lbs were pretty complex - self-esteem issues, relationship dramas, and a massive emotional attachment to food, compounded by the fact that [I just really, really loved pizza...](#) Yep. It's complicated.

To make a lifestyle change, you have to address all of these issues in and for themselves - and that'll require you to be [brutally honest](#) with yourself at times, even if you're not sure you want to - but the long-term improvements in your overall wellbeing, physically and emotionally, will make it completely worth it.

By the end of 2012, we'll have a meal plan available for download from the blog - which should help to make the nutrition side a little easier to work with.

Time-wise, this programme will take up about an hour and a half of your time, three or four times a week. That might sound like a lot, especially if you're used to exercising in a conventional, all-out sweat festival kind of way. But it's not like that. At all.

One of the best bits of feedback that comes in from this programme is the fact that it [fits into your day-to-day life](#). You don't leave the gym dripping with sweat, because you're working out in a different way - but one which really does work. As you can see - here's how my body changed over a 8 month period:



However - one of the most important things to get set in your mind is that the scales really don't matter. For this, I refer you to the photos second and third from the right. Between those two photos, [I hadn't lost any weight](#). At all. I'd gained muscle, and I'd lost fat - but as far as my bathroom scales were concerned, I had made absolutely no progress whatsoever.

So use the scales as a vague point of reference over a long period of time - but if you can get access to a [body composition scale](#) instead, then use that. That ol' weight business? It's misleading as heck. Don't fall for it.



Why Join a **Gym?**

Lots of people have never been in a gym. And with good reason – to the uninitiated, they can seem like **scary places**.

I know when I first walked into my gym, I was pretty certain they were going to start **throwing sticks at the fatty** before chasing me out with pitchforks and flames. Fortunately, that wasn't the case - quite the opposite, in fact - but it was a pretty scary first step through those doors. A giant leap, if you will.

Now, it is possible to lose weight on this programme by working out at home - but **we really do recommend joining a gym** to give you the best possible chances of success, for a number of reasons.

At home, you're still surrounded by the **distractions and barriers to your own good health** that you haven't yet come to terms with. Bashing away on a treadmill with the cookie jar visible out of the corner of your eye seems like a cruel thing to do to anyone, let alone yourself.

Aside from this form of mental torture, there are practical reasons that having access to a gym will improve the likelihood that you'll succeed when following this programme. **Safety is the first issue** – because to make the most of the resistance training this programme involves, being able to safely use high quality equipment is crucial. It's amazing how much 'at home' resistance training equipment isn't really up to scratch, which is part of the reason so many cupboards across the land are full of this stuff just gathering dust.

As we'll see, the resistance training element requires you to **keep increasing the level of weights** you're using, so it's important to have access to an ever higher level to keep that muscle growth going. This is something you might struggle to do at home.

That said, there are definite barriers to getting yourself to a gym – the very act of joining can be an intimidating experience in itself, and no matter how confident you are, **it'll always seem as though people are looking** when you first jump on to a machine. They can also be expensive, although there's been a huge growth in the number of small, cheap-and-cheerful gyms, and even free, outdoor ones, over the last few years – so it's not impossible to get access to the equipment you need.

The key thing to overcome when first joining a gym is the fear – fear that you'll be made to do something you don't want to do (**you won't**), or fear that you're not fit enough to be there (**you are.**) The very fact that you're thinking about it – and the fact that you're reading this book – shows that you're ready to make a big change to your life, and it could be that for you, walking through those gym doors is the first step. But it's one that you won't regret.

If you really can't join a gym, it doesn't mean that you can't do the walking part of the programme - and any resistance training you can do at home, even if it's with freeweights, or just your own body, is still very much worth doing. You'll still see results, so long as you're patient - so don't quit on me just yet.



The Warm Up

This part isn't too strenuous – it's about **getting your whole body moving**, so you can avoid any stresses, strains or injuries once we really get going.

If you're used to stretching before exercise, then you should continue to do so as normal. It's **not absolutely necessary**, according to recent research – but if you usually stretch, and you stop, you'll increase the risk of injury. If you're not a stretcher, though – don't worry about it.

All you need to do, warming up, is **five to ten minutes** of light to moderate intensity activity that uses **both your lower and your upper body**. We're talking rowing, a gentle jaunt on the cross trainer, or simply a brisk walk on the treadmill whilst swinging your arms. The important thing is to get your whole body moving – so the bike won't cut it.

During this time, take notice of what's going on with your body. Pay attention to any weak spots or issues you might have, but also... Enjoy it. **You're getting moving, and that's a good thing**. These are your first steps to getting your whole body – and your whole life – healthier.



Resistance Exercises

People tend to avoid using weights machines when they're first starting out, for a lot of reasons. Sometimes it's because they're uncomfortable with the equipment, or they're scared of risking an injury, but usually, it's **just because of the other people around**. That's understandable – it's easy to associate weight training with scary looking body-building types, and they can seem intimidating at first – but resistance based exercises are a really crucial part of this programme, and once you're comfortable with how they work, your confidence will grow pretty quickly.

So why is it so important?

Think of your body like a car. If you've only got a very small car, you'll only need a little petrol tank to keep everything running along nicely. But if you've got a bigger vehicle (or **more junk in your trunk**) you'll need a big tank of petrol, or you'll find yourself constantly having to pull over and fill 'er up.

Your muscles contain glycogen reserves. Glycogen is really important, because **it's the fuel your body uses during exercise** – so an increased percentage of skeletal muscle, with a lower percentage of fat, means you've got more glycogen to hand. Meaning you won't have to pull over and top up anywhere near as often.

When you're exercising regularly and eating well, the calories you consume are used to replenish depleted glycogen reserves, rather than being stored away as fat. That's why it'll seem like you're eating a lot on this programme – but because it's all the right stuff, and it's combined with exercise, it's all doing exactly what it's supposed to do. Remember, your body is a **very, very efficient machine** – so this is all about giving it the opportunity to make the most of what you're putting into it.

An added advantage of having increased levels of skeletal muscle is that it can help people with bone density problems, like osteoporosis. Every day, the body replaces worn out cells – from skin, to muscle, to bone – and you get a **brand new skeleton every 7-10 years**. This means that the density of your bone tissue is relevant to the stresses and strains it sees at that time – so if it knows you're consistently working it hard, and adding muscle, it'll try to give you a nice, solid scaffold to attach to.

The resistance part of the programme is based on a variant of something called “**High Intensity Resistance Training**” (which has similarities with HIIT – which you might've heard of) which has been shown to help to control blood sugar levels.

It's crucially, fundamentally important to make sure you're using weights that are at the right level to make the most

of the programme. There's something called the [Central Governor Theory](#), which is an inbuilt safety check the body uses to stop you over-exerting yourself.

All well and good, you might think – but sometimes, and especially if you're coming from a perspective where you're [not used to physical exercise](#), this can actually get in the way of what you need to be doing.

It's not unusual to start out on a lighter weight, and think 'I can't lift anything heavier than this' – but when you do that, [apply it to a real world scenario](#). When you're getting out of a chair, for instance, and you push yourself up using your arms, you're lifting a significant proportion of your body weight. So there's no reason you can't do a pretty heavy lift when you're working the same muscles in the gym.

That said, we'd always recommend if it's your first time on the machines, asking one of the instructors in your gym to help you to determine what weights you should start from – and then working your way up as you get stronger. In designing this part of the programme, we have stolen a tip from the bodybuilding crew – but you categorically will not end up looking like Arnold Schwarzenegger if you follow this programme. So stop worrying about it. But we do follow their structure of heavy weights, with less reps and more sets. Or, in English – we lift heavy weights in, say, [three groups of ten lifts](#), rather than one group of twenty.

It's a good idea to use the [larger muscle groups first](#), because the smaller ones tend to get in there and assist in these exercises. For instance, when you're doing the chest press, you're using your triceps too – so it's worth doing your tricep exercises after the chest press so they don't get too exhausted to help out later on.

You'll probably notice that there aren't any sit-ups or crunches in this programme. That's because if you're doing the exercises at the required intensity, you'll be [working your core muscles at all times](#) – which is a definite added bonus!

So – how much do you have to do?

We recommend [three sets of eight to ten reps](#). That might not sound like a lot – but you should be working pretty damn hard throughout. In your first set, you can just about expect to reach ten, and be pretty tired when you get there. Second set, you're probably looking at nine, and in the third, you should barely reach eight. That's how you know you're working at the right level. If you hit ten every time, your weights are too light – so crank them up a notch.

This is part of the reason we're able to sit here and say that this programme can work for anyone – because it's [adaptive to your own ability level](#). It'll continue to change with your level of fitness, because you should be continually assessing whether you're working hard enough – meaning that it'll always have the desired effect.

And that desired effect is this – when you're working your muscles at a high intensity, for short periods, your muscles are rapidly fatigued, meaning your glycogen reserves are depleted. And when you're fresh out of glycogen, your body draws glucose from your blood to replenish them quickly – meaning not only does it build muscle, but it also helps to [manage your blood sugar levels](#), which can have a really positive effect if you're at risk of diabetes.

Resistance training will almost certainly seem strange at first – especially if you've never done it before. But the positive effects of building muscle [aren't just aesthetic](#) – it'll improve your overall health, your strength, and your ability to keep diseases like diabetes and osteoporosis at bay.

It should stretch you beyond what you think you can do – which is a key part of this whole lifestyle change business. Understanding where you think your limits are, and the enormous gulf between there and where they actually lie, will make you realise [how strong you are inside and out](#) – and how much you can achieve when you put your mind to it. So for all that we've said about the physical benefits of resistance training, remember that this isn't just about weight loss.

This is about your whole body, [and your whole self](#) – which is a good mantra to think of when you're really pushing yourself to reach that last rep!



Fat Burning Exercise

You've done your resistance training, and you feel like a god or goddess. But now it's time to burn fat.

There's a very important reason it's in this order – because leaving the fat burning section till last will **reduce the muscle soreness** you might feel the next day. Let's face it – it's hard enough to go to the gym without feeling like you've been hit by a bus the morning after. And there's no need for that to be the case.

The thing is, one by-product of lifting weights is that there's a build-up of lactic acid in your muscles – which can lead to them feeling sore later on. The only real method of removing that is to **increase your blood flow by raising your heart rate**, which then flushes it all right back out of your system. Happy days.

So... What do we mean by fat burning?

Your body has two different sources of energy. There are the **glycogen reserves**, which we've already mentioned, in the muscles and around the liver. Typically, an individual stores enough for around twelve to fourteen hours, or two hours of sustained intensity. That's why marathon runners can tend to hit something called a 'wall' – because they'll use it all up. That's also why they'll use sports drinks to get through, because glucose can be used to replace the glycogen reserves once they've been used up.

In this workout, though, you'll be relying on the second source of energy – **which is fat**.

Yeah, fat. You and I both know the more of that we use up, the better this whole business works out. Fat is a storage mechanism, but when we can use it, it's a lovely, energy rich fuel source. However, to make it usable, this fuel has to be converted from fat, so that the glycerol can be extracted to be used by the working muscles. This is happening in your body all the time, in combination with other things – and this process of breaking down fat **burns calories in itself**, which is no bad thing.

When your body is at rest, there's a **harmony between your fuel sources**, meaning your body uses both in the normal way. However, as your level of intensity increases, your dependency on the glycogen in your muscles increases too – because it's easy to utilise this glycogen in those active muscles.

Higher intensity exercise invokes another survival mechanism, much like we've mentioned in reference to calorie restricted diets. The body **shuts down the things it doesn't feel it needs**, which is why sometimes, you'll find your appetite disappears when you're exercising at a high intensity.

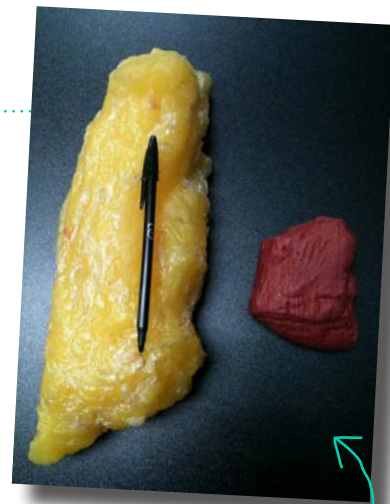
For the dieter, it's often thought that to lose weight, it's important to work out at a high intensity – and in principle, the total calorie model of calories in/calories out does work. Energy is being used. But it's all coming from your glycogen reserves – meaning that you're not burning anywhere near the amount of fat you'd like to. This also explains the research that's shown that after a high intensity workout, **portion sizes tend to increase** – subconsciously, this is because your body is trying to make up those glycogen reserves.

All it means for you, on a diet, is that **you work really, really hard**...and don't burn much fat. And you tend to eat more afterwards, because you're hungry from all that work.

Boo hiss.

So rather than using up glycogen, we advocate fat burning. It takes longer, but it does ensure that you're definitely losing fat, and it won't subconsciously stimulate your appetite – which, I'm sure you'll agree, is a far better method of losing weight than just **tiring yourself out and making yourself hungry**.

There are a lot of scientific studies that show that we can be pretty precise as to where fat burning zones exist. It's possible to be very specific – but it can be varied quite significantly by age, sex, medication, time of day, month, and



5lbs of fat vs. 5lbs muscle... Ewww.

so on, so it's not possible to categorically say where that fat burning zone is in a narrow sense for everyone.

But from our research, both from real world observations coupled with body composition analysis, and the user participation and feedback we've seen so far, we've managed to determine that **between the ranges of 115-130bpm**, a significant proportion of calories burned come from stored fat – which is exactly what we're aiming for.

The second key to this part of the workout is **duration**. As a lower intensity workout will, naturally, burn less calories than if you're pounding away at a rate of knots, it's necessary to do it for a longer period of time to get the maximum effect.

Some studies have suggested that, regardless of what you're doing, the first twenty minutes of any activity will draw on your glycogen reserves, because the body is continually assessing and reassessing what it needs to be doing – but once it's determined that you're walking at a constant pace, **it'll settle into it and allow the fat burning to begin**. That's why, again, it's good to be able to do this in a gym – because although you can get out and walk anywhere you like, the fact that the terrain, speed and incline will all be constant in a gym means your body can really relax into the fat burning zone and make the most of all that stored fat.

So how long, exactly, is enough?

You should be aiming for somewhere between **sixty to ninety minutes** of this low-intensity exercise, three or four times a week. And this isn't just an arbitrary number. There's some more science coming up.

When you exercise at a low intensity for ninety minutes, your body excretes an enzyme called lipoprotein lipase. We love lipoprotein lipase for two reasons. Not only does it reduce the fat in your bloodstream by up to 33%, but it also **continues to flush out fat long after you've stopped exercising**. Meaning that your body isn't only burning fat from the stored reserves, but it's also using the food energy you put into it more efficiently afterwards.

We've observed the positive effects of this with as little as sixty minutes of low level exercise – so if you can do that, three or four times a week, your body will become far more efficient at burning fat. **All the time**.

Now, you might be thinking “I'm busy! How am I going to fit in **three or four whole hours** of walking into my week?”

First of all – there are **168 hours in a week**. It's doable. But planning it in is absolutely key.

Secondly, this is about making the time for yourself. Walking, cycling, or whatever you choose to do to get your heart rate in that zone, you should be giving yourself these three or four hours to just spend time **enjoying what your body can do**.

This whole plan isn't just about weight loss, but about overall wellbeing and happiness. Giving yourself that sort of time to increase your physical activity will help not only to burn fat, and to lose weight, but also to increase your **energy levels, your self-confidence, and your overall outlook**.

But this **is** about attitude.

Walking into the gym, thinking ‘ugh, another hour on the treadmill, I'm so bored’ will give you a **completely different workout** to walking in thinking ‘I'm going to spend an hour listening to some music, giving my body a boost and thinking about how amazing I'm going to look and feel in six months time.’

Everything about your life can change if you stick to this. With the right attitude, and the right outlook, you can make a huge difference to your health, your wellbeing – and your waistline – and **these changes will last a lifetime**. It's not a fad diet, and it'll take more of a commitment than just ‘cutting carbs’ – but once you've made the transition into a better lifestyle, and you've made this programme a part of your life, you won't look back.

On the next page, you'll find a chart to track your progress at the gym - print it off and get going! I'd recommend having a look on YouTube if you're not sure on any of the exercises, as there are some really great videos on there that'll show you everything you need to know about the correct way to do them.

For those of you taking part in the programme at home, you'll also be able to find versions of these exercises that you can do too - so good luck!

The Programme

This chart should come to the gym with you - keep a note of the weights you're lifting and try to increase them a little as often as you can!

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Warmup	Time									
	Speed									
	Incline/Level									
Chest Press	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Shoulder Press	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Seated Row	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Bicep Curl	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Tricep Pushdown	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Leg Press	Weight									
	Reps									
	Sets									
Fat Burning	Time									
	Speed									
	Incline/Level									

A Word on **Nutrition**

I've published this previously as Part 3 of my 'Where Do I Start?' series - but while the meal plan is in progress, here's a rough guide to nutrition and what you should be aiming for!

I've asked Matt to help me with this post, because [he's a nutritionist](#) (who actually won the Contribution to Physical Activity award at the Worcester Sports Awards recently for this very programme – woo!), so this is kind of his specialist subject. I can't over-estimate how much of a fountain of knowledge he is, so there's a heck of a lot to say on this subject – but this is just a 'beginner's guide.'

Despite that – it's long. So go make a cup of tea, and then get comfortable. This is going to take considerably longer than just saying 'you are only allowed to eat cabbage soup' because [it's more complicated than that](#). But it's also totally worth it.

The thing about nutrition – certainly to my mind – is that it's really simple, but for some reason, the education on what makes a healthy, balanced diet just doesn't seem to be there. The information is available, especially with websites like the [British Nutrition Foundation](#) providing all sorts of healthy guidance – but it doesn't seem to manage to quite get through to most of us. I know before I started this programme, I thought it was as simple as 'eat less, move more' – and to an extent, that's true – but calorie restricted diets just aren't feasible in the long-term.

Here's why, from Matt:

"The body is a really, really amazing machine. It's resilient, and has an astounding ability to overcome difficult situations – that's why we've survived as a species in all conditions, across the globe. Our bodies are [incredibly adaptive](#).

So when you go on a calorie-restricted diet, your body adapts to that, just as it would any other situation. The body's mechanism for coping with restricted periods of food intake is to go into a sort of "Sleep Mode" – storing and saving as much power and energy as it can.

It'll perform the tasks you normally do more efficiently, because it knows that there probably won't be enough calories to go at full capacity – and any excess it does find it'll store as fat to prepare for the prolonged periods where it doesn't feel you're eating enough. That's why [you can lose weight this way, but still be quite 'flabby'](#) – because the number on the scale is going down, but the body's actually storing more fat."

So dramatically reducing your calorie intake just doesn't work, if you're looking to get healthy, svelte and toned. Which, let's face it, is exactly what we all want to be. It's the [trifecta of sexy-booty-ness](#), which is a word I just made up – but I think you'll agree, it's awesome.

The good side of your body being so adaptive, though, is that when it's getting all the right things, in the right balance, it'll adapt to that too – [which is why the whole 'lifestyle change' thing is so crucial](#). Change your life, and your body will keep up to make sure you're running as efficiently as possible – and if you're making the change from an unbalanced, unhealthy diet to a good one, you can pretty much guarantee you'll lose weight (and crucially – keep it off.)

Good nutrition is a matter of having a little of everything. Understanding that your body needs protein, carbohydrates, and fats in the right balance is key, because [each of these things has a different role to play](#) in keeping your body as efficient and healthy as possible. Carbohydrates, as well as being an important energy source, are necessary for transporting some of the nutrients (among other things) around the body; protein helps to build muscle; and fats provide essential fatty acids, and helps the body to absorb certain vitamins that it can't make the most of without fat to dissolve them.

These nutrients do lots of other things too – but what I'm getting at here is that they're [all important in different ways](#). Cutting out fat, or cutting out carbs, will only ever set you back in the end.



Now, the trouble is with this balanced diet malarkey is that I can't (yet) give you a shopping list of things you have to buy and send you on your way to better health. [The cabbage soup diet it ain't](#) – although hopefully once we've finished the meal plan, there'll be something a little more solid to go on.

From the British Nutrition Foundation's website:

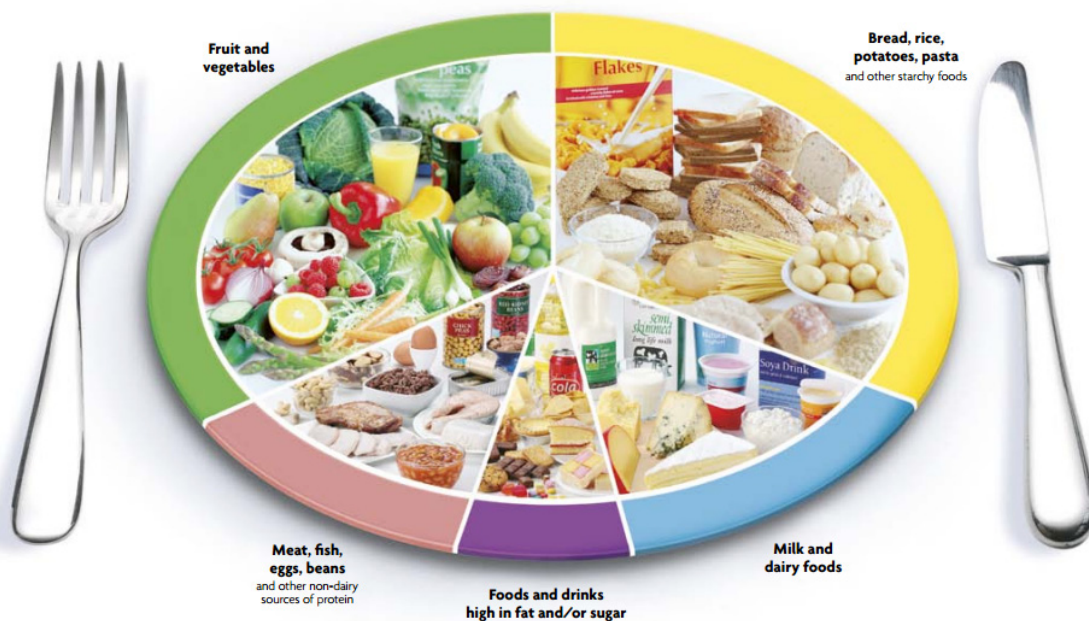
"Our diets should be based on bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods and rich in fruit and vegetables. A variety of foods from these two groups should make up [two-thirds of the food we eat](#).

Most of the remaining third of the diet should be made up of milk and dairy foods, meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein, with limited amounts of foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar. [Most of us eat too much salt](#) and it is a good idea to check food labels to find those with a lower salt content and to minimise the amount of salt you add to food at home."

Sounds pretty simple. And if you're more the visual type, the [Eat Well Plate](#) (which I've mentioned briefly before) is a really good illustration of how that measures up in real terms:

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



If your food over the course of a given day looks something like that, you're doing all the right things. The thing you'll notice is that most of the categories – with the exception of 'Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar' – are not processed foods. They're ingredients. [That's why I tend to avoid processed stuff where I can](#) – because it's usually a pretty safe bet that if it comes in a packet and has a two year shelf-life, it's probably chock full of sugar and fat, not to mention all sorts of crazy chemicals that just have no place in my diet.

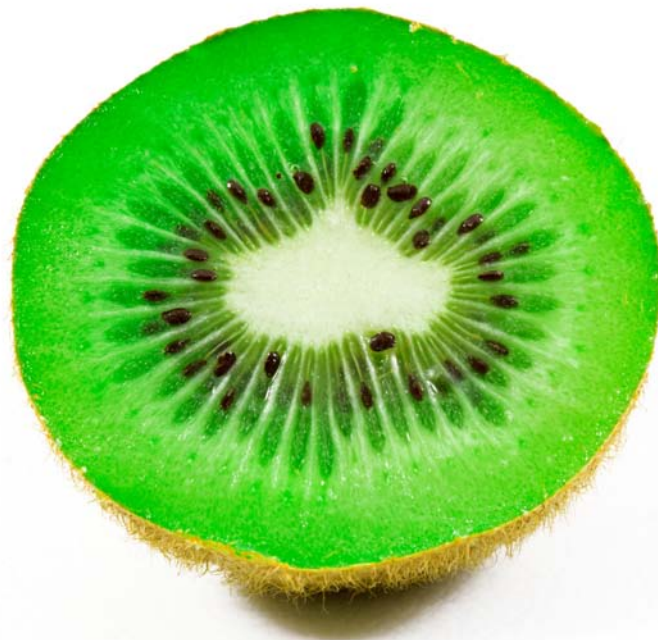
The key is keeping it simple – and [tasty](#).

One way to assess where you're going wrong, nutritionally, is to [write down everything you eat for a couple of days](#), and then compare it to that. I didn't realise how much sugar I was eating until I started writing it all down at first – but spending time thinking about what you're currently doing is a good way to start sorting out your diet.

If you're not a big fan of cooking, or even if you're a bit of a gourmet chef, the food you eat when you're not thinking about it reflects who you are, and your relationship with food. Taking an honest look at your own resources – be they financial, skills-wise or even just taste – is a necessary step in moving forward into positive changes. That's why it's so important to be educated on nutrition as a whole, rather than just deciding you have to cut carbs, or starve, or whatever – this sort of knowledge gives you [the power to make your own decisions](#) and actually eat food you enjoy whilst still living a healthy lifestyle.

I know that's kind of annoying – because personally, I'd love to be able to provide a list of 'five things you have to do to lose weight' and leave it at that. **If only it were that simple.** But while all this seems intimidating at first, once you start to understand it, you'll find you're more in tune with your body, and you'll see the rewards of your learning.

The thing I've learned about nutrition, more than anything else, is that in a balanced diet, one treat, or one day where all you eat is toast, cake and curry because you have a hangover (I have done that – recently – no shame) **will not make you gain ten pounds.** It's not like when you're on a diet, where the logic is that everything has to be restricted and that one 'cheat' automatically means you're a failure.



Lifestyle should be just that – life. Eating well, and being happy, means having a little of everything – and **not feeling guilty about it.** The 80/20 rule is a good one to go by, because if you're doing everything right 80% of the time, the 20% where you're not won't really matter. I mean, I personally know that I can't have a whole packet of biscuits in my cupboards because I will gnaw my way through them without even thinking about it. But if I've got a craving for a sweet fix, I'll go out and do it – but I'll just buy as much as I need.

It's about balance, and understanding that it's (feel free to yawn here) a lifestyle change. I'm living it – and I know it's a permanent thing, rather than just something I'll do until I reach my target weight. Because diet logic usually means celebrating reaching your goals with a family sized bucket of fried chicken. I, on the other hand, feel like I've been in 'maintenance mode' for months, now – even though I'm continuing to lose fat at the same rate as before. My diet is balanced already for my target weight – so no change is required, which means **I don't have to worry about yo-yo diets or weight gain.** I've got it all covered.

Food is a big part of your life – and, as has been pointed out many times before, it's not something you can just 'cut out' like you can if you have an issue with, say, smoking, or alcohol. It's there to provide fuel, to keep your body running, and – importantly – **to be enjoyed.** It is totally possible to have a healthy relationship with food, as both a fuel source and a pleasure, while losing weight – but you do have to be patient and take the time to really understand it.

It's a learning process, but one which pays dividends in the long-term – and with obesity predicted to top 60% in some US states by 2030, there's no better time to start learning it. Not just for yourself, or for the ten, twenty, or two hundred pounds you need to lose – but **for future generations too.** It's possible to eat better, and be happier, by making small changes to your life – and I promise, the investment you make in learning it now will pay off.

After all... You are what you eat.

Contact **Fat Girl** PhD

I'm always glad to hear from you guys - so please do get in touch!

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I'm always open to new ideas about posts, interviews and the like, so don't be afraid to drop me an email if you'd like to hear any more about me or Matt and his programme!



Disclaimer & Legal Stuff

I'm sure it goes without saying - but you should always consult with your doctor before starting out on a new diet and fitness programme, especially if you've got any underlying medical conditions.

Everything in this guide is the copywrite of Katie Lowe and Matt Peacock (obviously - we wrote it!) and if we find you stealing it without permission, we'll send someone to break your legs. That's why I'm building the muscles, duh.

Finally - this is Version 1. This is the product of the first four years of research - but that's not to say we won't learn new things, and incorporate new ideas. However - it works. Clearly. So good luck, and enjoy!