



Strength on a Plate

When people talk about getting stronger, the conversation usually starts in the gym. Squats. Deadlifts. Progressive overload. Maybe a protein shake thrown in for good measure? Strength doesn't start under a barbell. It starts on your plate.

What you eat doesn't just fuel workouts, it determines whether your body can build, maintain, and protect strength over time. And no, this isn't about eating like a bodybuilder or choking down chicken and rice forever. It's about understanding what strength actually needs to thrive.

Protein: the building blocks

Protein is essential for building and preserving muscle. **Every day, your muscles break down slightly through movement, exercise, and normal life.** Protein supplies the amino acids that repair this damage and help muscles grow stronger over time.

Having a daily protein target helps, this will be specific to you and your goals.

Focus on consistency, include a source of protein in most meals. Eggs, dairy, chicken, fish, meat, tofu, beans, and lentils all contribute. Think of protein as the non-negotiable. Everything else supports it.

Carbohydrates: fuel for performance

Carbohydrates are often underestimated in strength-focused diets, but they play a critical role.

Carbs fuel intense training and replenish muscle energy stores.

When carbohydrate intake is too low, workouts feel harder, recovery slows, and strength gains can plateau. This doesn't mean you need to load up on sugar or have pasta with every meal. Think simple, nourishing sources: rice, potatoes, oats, fruit, whole grains, and vegetables.

If protein represents building blocks, carbs are the electricity – yes, you can build muscle without them, but everything works better when they're there.

Fats: supporting long-term strength

Fats support hormones, joint health, and nutrient absorption and all are essential for maintaining strength, especially over time. They also provide a steady source of energy and help keep meals satisfying.

Healthy fats include olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado, eggs, and fatty fish like salmon. You don't need large amounts, but you do need enough. Think of fats as the building maintenance crew, crucial for keeping the system running smoothly.

Micronutrients: small but mighty

Strength involves more than muscle. Bones, tendons, ligaments, and nerves all play a role. Vitamins and minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, zinc, and vitamin D support muscle contraction, bone density, and nervous system function.

Eating a wide variety of whole foods and colour is the easiest way to cover these needs. If your plate looks boring, your micronutrients probably are too.

Hydration: the silent hero

Muscles are largely made of water, and even mild dehydration can reduce strength and coordination.

Drinking fluids consistently throughout the day supports performance and recovery. You don't need fancy electrolyte drinks all day, but you do need to drink enough fluids consistently. Water is usually enough. Add electrolytes if you sweat heavily or train hard in the heat.

Build strength bite by bite

One meal won't make you strong. One missed workout won't make you weak. Strength comes from building habits over time – eat, train, sleep, repeat. The goal isn't perfection, it's reliability and consistency. Because real strength isn't just about what you can lift today, it's about what your body can support for years to come.

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