Kick Starter: Chapter 2 — Nutrition

Andrew Caine PT

LEVELUP Online Coaching

www.andrewcainept.com



Welcome

Hi there!

Welcome to the LEVELUP Online Coaching Kick Starter.

Whether you are picking up a barbell for the first time or you have been training for years and are finally ready to do it properly — this is where we build the foundation.

I have put together 7 chapters, each covering a key topic that will set you up to get the most from your coaching. Training, nutrition, mindset, progress tracking, sleep — everything you need to understand what you are doing and why.

Work through these chapters at your own pace. The more you understand the principles behind your programme, the better your results will be.

Let's get to work.

Andrew

What to Expect in Chapter 2: Nutrition Explained

1. **Importance of Nutrition**
2. **Basic Nutrition Principles**
3. **Nutrition and Your Goals**
4. **Food Tracking and Trainerize**
5. **Practical Tips for Healthy Eating**
6. **Supplements**

Importance of Nutrition

Training gets a lot of attention but nutrition is where most people either accelerate their results or quietly undermine them.

You can follow a great programme and still make slow progress if your nutrition is not supporting it. Get the nutrition right and everything else works better — your energy, your recovery, your body composition, and how you feel day to day.

Here is why it matters.

Fuelling your training

Carbohydrates are your primary fuel source during exercise, particularly during higher intensity sessions. Without adequate carbohydrate intake, training quality drops, sessions feel harder than they should, and performance suffers over time.

Supporting recovery

After training, your body needs nutrients to repair muscle tissue and restore energy. Protein drives the repair process. Carbohydrates help replenish glycogen stores. Getting both in across the day is what makes recovery actually happen rather than just hoping for it.

Building muscle

Protein is the raw material for muscle growth. No matter how good your training programme is, if you are consistently under on protein, you are leaving progress on the table. This is one of the most common reasons people train hard and see limited results.

Supporting overall health

A well-structured diet provides the vitamins, minerals, and micronutrients that keep your immune system functioning, your energy consistent, and your body working properly beyond just the gym.

Basic Nutrition Principles

Understanding the basics takes the confusion out of nutrition. There is a lot of noise out there. This is what actually matters.

Macronutrients

These are the nutrients that provide energy. There are three.

Carbohydrates

4 calories per gram

Your body's preferred energy source, particularly during exercise. Focus on quality sources — oats, rice, potatoes, fruit, and vegetables — but carbohydrates are not the enemy and cutting them out is not the answer.

Protein

4 calories per gram

Essential for building and repairing muscle tissue. This is the macro most people undereat and it is the one that matters most for body composition.

A practical target for most people is between **1.6 and 2.2g per kg of bodyweight per day**. Hit this consistently and it will make a significant difference.

Fats

9 calories per gram

Support hormone function, joint health, and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Do not cut fat out entirely — focus on quality sources like eggs, oily fish, avocado, nuts, and olive oil.

Micronutrients

Vitamins and minerals do not provide energy directly but they are essential for almost every physiological process in the body. Energy metabolism, immune function, bone health, muscle function, and recovery all depend on adequate micronutrient intake. Eating a varied diet with plenty of vegetables, fruit, and whole foods covers most of your bases. The supplements section covers the gaps worth filling deliberately.

Hydration

Dehydration impairs both physical performance and cognitive function — often before you feel thirsty. Drink water consistently throughout the day, not just during training. A practical guide is to aim for pale yellow urine. If you are training hard or in warm weather, you will need more.

Fibre, Meal Timing & Meal Frequency

Fibre

Most people are not getting enough. The NHS recommended intake for adults is **30g per day** — the average adult consumes around 20g. Adequate fibre supports digestive health, gut microbiota, blood sugar regulation, and satiety.

Good sources include whole grains, vegetables, fruit, legumes, nuts, and seeds. If you are increasing fibre intake, do it gradually and keep water intake high to avoid digestive discomfort.

Meal Timing

Having food available in and around your training windows is useful but it is not something to stress about. A meal or snack containing protein and carbohydrates in the hours before training supports performance. Getting protein in across the day — spread reasonably across your meals — supports recovery and muscle building.

Total daily intake is what matters most. Missing your post-workout shake by 90 minutes is not going to cost you results. Not hitting your protein target consistently across the week will.

Meal Frequency

There is no optimal number of meals to eat per day. It comes down to what works for your schedule, your preferences, and your ability to hit your targets consistently.

Three meals a day, four meals, intermittent fasting — all can work. Pick a pattern that fits your life and allows you to eat enough protein across the day.

Nutrition and Your Goals

Food and drink affects how you look, how you perform, and how you feel every day.

It is also one of the most confusing areas of health because there is contradictory information everywhere — from social media, from the mainstream press, from well-meaning people at the gym. Most of it is noise.

I take a straightforward approach because at the end of the day, it comes down to **energy balance**.

> **Energy balance means calories in versus calories out.** Your body burns calories constantly — through movement, digestion, breathing, and simply existing. How much you burn is your total daily energy expenditure (TDEE). What you eat and drink determines your intake.

Fat Loss	Build Muscle / Gain Weight	Maintain Weight
Consume **less** than you burn — a calorie deficit.	Consume **more** than you burn — a calorie surplus.	Intake and expenditure need to roughly **balance**.

This sounds simple because it is, in principle. The complexity comes in the execution — building a sustainable approach that fits your life and that you can actually maintain. That is what we work on together.

Your programme will include specific calorie and protein targets based on your goals.

These are not arbitrary numbers — they are calculated from your TDEE and adjusted to create the right conditions for your goal, whether that is fat loss, muscle building, or both.

A moderate calorie deficit of **200 to 400 calories per day** is sustainable and effective for fat loss without the misery of aggressive restriction. We adjust as we go based on how your body responds.

Practical Tips for Healthy Eating

Plan ahead

The single biggest reason people make poor food choices is not lack of willpower, it is lack of preparation. When you have no food ready and you are hungry, you will eat whatever is convenient. Spend time at the start of the week working out roughly what your meals will look like. You do not need to meal prep seven matching Tupperware containers. Just know what you are eating.

Prioritise protein at every meal

Build each meal around a protein source first. Chicken, beef, fish, eggs, Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, tofu — get the protein in, then build the rest of the meal around it. This is the simplest and most effective way to consistently hit your protein target.

Do not demonise food

There are no bad foods, only a bad overall diet. A meal out, a takeaway, a few drinks at the weekend — none of these derail progress unless they become the consistent pattern. The way you eat across the week is what drives your results, not any single meal.

The 80/20 approach

80% of your intake should come from whole, nutrient-dense foods that support your goals. The remaining 20% can include the things you enjoy that do not fit a strict clean eating template. This is not a cheat day system — it is a sustainable framework that means your diet does not have to be miserable and you do not have to choose between results and living your life. Diets fail because they restrict too aggressively and are impossible to maintain. The 80/20 approach works because it is liveable.

Watch alcohol

Alcohol contains 7 calories per gram and has no nutritional value beyond the social enjoyment. A few drinks at the weekend can represent a significant calorie intake. This does not mean you cannot drink — it means being aware of it and accounting for it. Chapter 3 covers how to approach weekends and social eating in more detail.

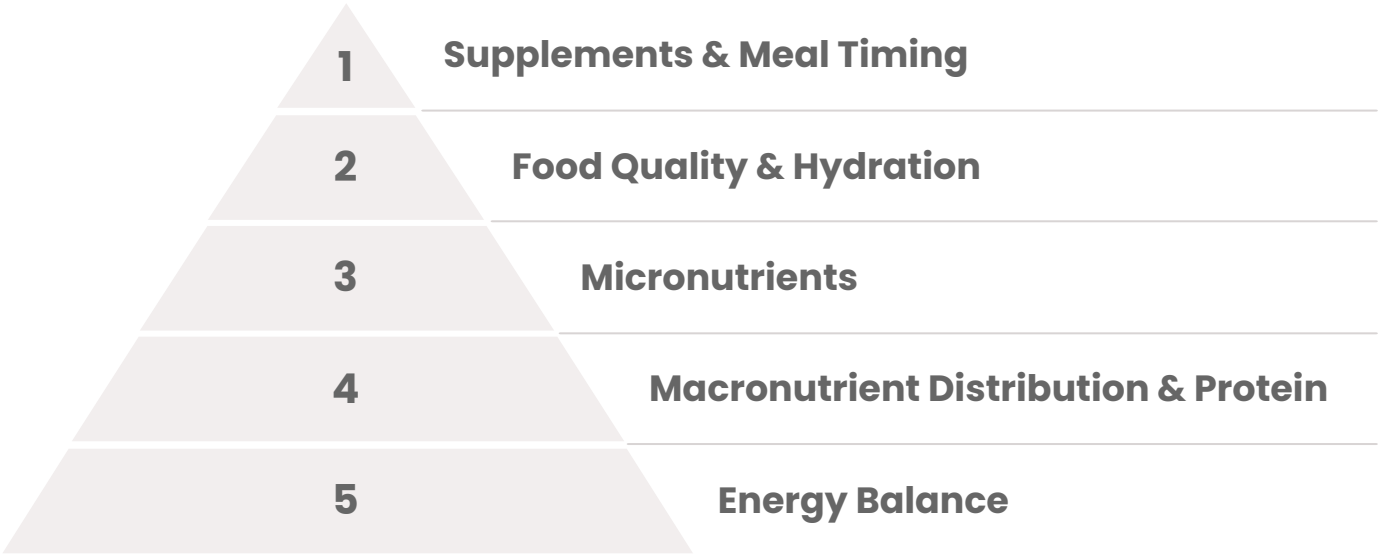
Stay consistent through imperfect weeks

One bad week does not undo months of progress. Getting back on track after a disrupted week is more important than the disruption itself. The clients who get the best results are not the ones who are perfect — they are the ones who are consistent enough over a long enough period.

What to Focus On

This pyramid puts nutrition in the right order of priority. The foundation is energy balance — getting your calories broadly right.

Above that is macronutrient distribution, particularly protein. Then micronutrients, food quality, and hydration. Meal timing and supplements sit at the top — they can add value but only once the foundations are already solid.



Most people in the fitness industry talk about supplements and meal timing while ignoring the foundations. **Get the base of the pyramid right first. Everything else is detail.**

Supplements

Supplements are exactly what the word suggests — a supplement to an already solid diet and training programme, not a replacement for one. The majority of what is sold in supplement shops is either unnecessary, underdosed, or actively overhyped. Here is an honest breakdown of what is actually worth considering.

Whey Protein

Whey is a fast-digesting protein derived from milk. It is useful if you are struggling to hit your daily protein target through food alone. It is not magic — it is just a convenient and cost-effective way to get protein in. A good whey product will have high protein content and minimal unnecessary additives. **20 to 40 grams post-training or at any point in the day works fine.**

Casein Protein

Casein is a slower-digesting protein from the same source. Useful before bed if you want a sustained release of amino acids overnight. Not essential if you are already hitting your protein target through food and whey.

Creatine

Creatine is the most well-researched supplement in sports science with a substantial body of evidence behind it. It supports strength, power output, and muscle building by increasing the availability of ATP — your body's immediate energy currency. **Take 5 grams per day at any time that is convenient.** Timing does not matter. Consistency does. You may notice a small increase in body weight initially due to water being drawn into the muscles — this is normal and not fat gain.

Vitamin D

If you are living in the UK, the likelihood is that you are deficient, particularly between October and March when sunlight levels are not sufficient for your body to produce adequate Vitamin D naturally. Deficiency impacts mood, immune function, bone health, and muscle function. **A daily supplement of 1000 to 2000 IU is a sensible baseline for most people.** Worth getting levels tested if you are unsure.

Supplements — What to Skip

Magnesium

Magnesium Glycinate or Magnesium Citrate supports muscle function, recovery, and sleep quality. Many people who train regularly are deficient without realising it. Taking it in the evening can help improve sleep depth and recovery overnight. **Avoid Magnesium Oxide — it is poorly absorbed and largely ineffective.**

Omega-3 / Fish Oils

If you do not eat oily fish regularly — salmon, mackerel, sardines — an Omega-3 supplement is worth taking. Omega-3 fatty acids support joint health, cardiovascular function, and recovery. Stick to the recommended guidelines on the product.

Multivitamin

A good quality multivitamin is a sensible insurance policy to cover any micronutrient gaps in your diet. It is not a substitute for eating well but it is a low-cost way to make sure the basics are covered. Do not exceed recommended dosages — more is not better with micronutrients.

Pre-Workout ⚠️

Most pre-workout products are expensive caffeine with added marketing. The active ingredient doing the work is almost always caffeine. If you want a pre-training boost, a black coffee or espresso does the same job for a fraction of the cost. If you do use a pre-workout product, check the caffeine content — more than 150 to 200mg can cause headaches, elevated heart rate, and anxiety in people who are sensitive to it. They are not necessary.

Fat Burners ❌

Not worth your money. The active ingredients are typically caffeine, green tea extract, and B vitamins — none of which produce meaningful fat loss independently. The only reliable mechanism for fat loss is a sustained calorie deficit. Save the money.

BCAAs ❌

If you are hitting your daily protein target, BCAAs are redundant. Complete protein sources — meat, fish, eggs, dairy, whey — already contain all the essential amino acids your body needs. There is no meaningful benefit to taking BCAAs on top of adequate protein intake.

Conclusion

> Nutrition does not have to be complicated. The fundamentals — hitting your calorie target, getting enough protein, eating mostly whole foods, and staying consistent — account for the vast majority of your results. Everything else is detail.

Most people who are not getting results from training are not failing in the gym. They are underestimating how much they eat, significantly under-eating protein, and not being consistent enough over long enough to see the compounding effect of doing the basics well.

You now have the framework. Your programme includes your targets. Track your food, hit your protein, and communicate with me when something is not working.

That is it. That is the approach.

Hit your calorie target	**Get enough protein**
Eat mostly whole foods	**Stay consistent**

Tools and Resources

Recommended Resources

Andrew Caine PT Academy

You get exclusive access to the Academy to view training guides, nutritional resources, and educational content.
www.andrewcainept.com

Andrew Huberman Podcast

Evidence-based content covering health, fitness, performance, and neuroscience.

Examine

Research-backed resource covering nutrition and supplements. Cuts through the noise with scientific evidence.

YouTube

Useful for exercise tutorials, form guidance, and further education on training and nutrition.

Andrew Caine PT on Instagram

Follow for regular evidence-based content on training, nutrition, and the balanced lifestyle you are working towards. **@andrewcainept**

How to Reach Me

Office Hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 8:00pm

Email: info@andrewcainept.com

Phone: 07824 467260

Website: www.andrewcainept.com