

MAINTENANCE PHASE

THE MAINTENANCE PHASE of dieting, also known as homeostasis, is when weight is relatively stable due to energy balance (calories in vs out) being in alignment. Maintenance is often referred to as the more difficult part of the dieting process due to the effort needed without the same tangible benefits seen in a fat loss or muscle building phase. Mastering the maintenance phase is how a person can successfully maintain weight and not worry about repeatedly losing and gaining weight. This comes from continued awareness and true behavior change.

There is no set amount of time someone needs to stay in maintenance as it's based on a variety of factors such as goals, adherence, physiological requirements, or personal preference.

During a maintenance phase, you can expect an increase in calories until weight levels off. Some weight gain is expected but it is usually caused by water retention and increasing glycogen and is not actual body fat. It's important to acknowledge this is normal and will happen. There is no calculation to know exactly what an individual's calories and macros need to be in order to maintain weight after a deficit, but we can increase calories slowly or a bit faster until we get there. The goal is to find the sweet spot. Each calorie increasing method has its pros and cons and comes down to personal preference and what prepares the dieter best for long term success.

Reasons for a maintenance phase



Satisfied with your current weight or body composition



Struggling with adherence and diet fatigue *(psychologically may need a break)*



Progress has slowed or stopped for an extended time *(physiologically may need a break)*

 - Real Life Application

In practical terms, the maintenance phase means eating and burning the number of calories to keep your weight about the same. There is no set time when someone has to go to a maintenance phase but it is encouraged after a prolonged period of being in a caloric deficit in order to settle in, reset hunger, and before transitioning into another phase (fat loss, muscle building).

 Main Takeaway

A maintenance phase should be looked at as a rest stop. It can be forever if you're happy with your weight or it can be a small break before continuing on to another goal. The important thing to remember is a maintenance phase isn't an invitation to completely be off a plan. You still need to pay attention and it's important not to get complacent, or "diet cocky" just because you are able to eat more calories. If a visible goal such as fat loss isn't happening it is normal to feel like you're working hard for nothing but that couldn't be further from the truth. You're working hard in order to keep what you earned. Much like a job or a relationship, your food plan shouldn't get forgotten just because you achieved a certain goal.

Resources

We've written a few articles on weight maintenance and life beyond dieting on the Stronger U blog - [All About Maintenance](#), [5 Strategies Long Term Members Can Use To Keep on Progressing](#), [Diet mode vs. Lifestyle mode](#) (otherwise known as maintenance) and how to tell the difference. Here's a [podcast](#) with two of our coaches discussing maintenance as well!

