

The Top 10 Ways to Pack on Serious Mass

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Anthony works as a sports nutritionist working with a variety of professional athletes including bodybuilders, powerlifters, weightlifters, strongmen, armwrestlers, football and hockey players, among others. One of the most asked questions he gets is how to gain lean muscle tissue while maintaining their current body fat percentage. Well, we are in luck, because he has provided us with his **Top 10 Ways to Pack on Serious Mass**. For all the lightweight lifters out there looking to go up a class, or you mass monsters looking to put on yet more size, this will definitely get you on your way to some serious mass!

#1: Eat 5-6 Times per Day

What did you just say? Eat 6 times per day? Yes, that's right! Don't think that you are going to gain quality size eating 3 square meals per day. The only type of mass you will put on eating only 3 times daily will be the fat type, and this is not our objective. There is no way that you can reach your caloric or your macronutrient needs eating 3 meals per day. If by some magical reason you can eat them in 3 meals, than you will be so full and bloated, you won't be able tie up your own shoes let alone pound out some heavy deadlifts. It's scientifically impossible to optimize your performance on three meals per day.

Eating 5-6 times per day will also keep your blood sugar levels stabilized and your metabolism elevated. Eating several times per day instead of the "Big 3" that most are used to, will provide your body with a constant supply of nutrients that you need to recover from your hard workouts. This will cause you to increase your lean tissue, while reducing your body fat percentage. Our goal here is to put on lean muscle mass, not take our body fat level to new heights.

Now let's take a look at why it is important that you NEVER skip a meal. First of all when you skip meals it slows down your metabolic rate. When you slow down your metabolic rate, two wonderful things happen to you. First you go into a catabolic or muscle wasting state. Secondly, since your brain thinks that you are starving it will tell your body to store any food that it does receive in the form of fat. So you will lose strength and muscle while gaining fat. Good enough reason not to skip meals?

The best way to ensure you get at least 5 meals in each day is to eat by the clock.

When trying to put on size, you just can't eat when you get hungry, otherwise it will take you a lot longer to get up to your next weight class. You have to eat by the clock, otherwise you will not meet your caloric and macronutrient needs by the time the day is over. With this in mind set a schedule that you will follow and have a meal or protein shake every 2.5- 3 hours. Not 4 or 5 hours but every 3! This is very important in your quest for size. This will make sure that you get at least 5 quality meals in per day.

I know that this sounds a little compulsive but in no time this will just become part of your lifestyle. This will mean that you will need to have all your **food prepared the night before** so that you will have it ready when you need it. Don't just think that you will just cook something when the time comes as most likely you will get lazy and you will just skip the meal. **You must prepare your meals ahead of time.**

Eating every three hours has many benefits. First, it will keep your metabolism elevated. Second it will keep your blood sugar levels stable throughout the day and will prevent you from getting those after lunch energy lows that so many people complain of. Next it will keep you in a positive nitrogen balance and will supply a constant stream of amino acids to your muscles, thereby keeping you in an anabolic state. As you can see eating by the clock is definitely worth it!

Also remember to increase your calories gradually; don't just jack them up like a maniac after reading this article. Each week try to increase your daily caloric intake by 250-750 calories depending on your weight, energy expenditure, metabolic rate, and level of insulin sensitivity. You have to slowly increase your calories or your digestive system will just get overloaded and will not be able to process and absorb the nutrients from the massive increase in food volume.

#2 : Drink Water

Water is very important for many reasons. Water is good for you believe it or not. It has many health and performance benefits. It keeps your organs functioning properly, clears toxins, reduces excess sodium from your body, and it hydrates your muscle cells. It even liberates fat stores on your body so they are burned off as an energy source. Dehydration will cause a major decrement in performance. Even a 2% state of dehydration will cause your performance to go out the window.

Water plays a major role in cell volumization. This is where nutrients are pulled inside of the muscle cell causing a multitude of reactions that leads to muscle growth. Water is very important in many processes including digestion, transportation and the absorption of nutrients. So how much water should you drink on a daily basis? You should drink on average at least 1oz of water per kilogram of bodyweight. This is a figure that can be increased depending on many factors that affect your hydration level. This amount will start as your baseline from which you can build upon.

A 220 pound (100kg) powerlifter would need to drink 100 ounces or slightly over 3 quarts of water per day as his minimum daily water intake. There are also many benefits to drinking water. They include lowering your chances for high blood pressure and kidney stones. Both of these nice little health problems can really cause havoc on your training. Try banging out some box squats when you're passing kidney stones the size of jawbreakers. It's not going to happen.

#3: Sleep

Sleep is not considered a food group so why am I talking about it in my nutritional column you ask? The reason why sleep is going to be discussed here is that it is essential in gaining lean mass. Your body repairs and recovers from your workout as you sleep. During this time, your muscles grow! Remember this, if you aren't sleeping you aren't growing and getting stronger.

Think back to a time when you couldn't get optimal sleep either during university exam time, or another time when sleep was of the essence. Think back how your strength level was, or how you were actually losing size. So how much sleep do you need per day? You should be getting at least 8 full hours of sleep per day. If you can get a 1-2 hour nap per day on top of this it would be even better. Getting proper sleep is a must for muscle growth. Without it, you can kiss gains in strength and size goodbye!

#4: Consume Enough Protein

"I eat enough protein. I probably ate around 50 grams today." Now if this sounds like you, we are in some serious trouble. That is unless you are a 60- pound child whose major energy expenditure for the day is playing with your Tonka Trucks. Ok, down to the serious stuff here. If you don't eat optimal amounts of protein, you will never put on the muscle mass that you so much desire. You are also hindering your strength gains as well.

If you are going up a weight class and you aren't eating the proper amount of protein, guess what? You will put on a nice extra layer of fat around your waist, instead of gaining lean muscle tissue. When trying to put on size, you have to make sure you constantly supply your body with essential amino acids throughout the day.

You should consume at least 1 gram of protein per pound of bodyweight per day. If you just jack up your carbs and fat without supplying your body with the protein that it needs, you will end up looking like "Mr. Marshmallow" instead of a strength athlete. Amino acids are the building blocks that you will need to gain lean muscle tissue and to ensure that going up a weight class will be muscle, not fat.

Protein helps in the recovery of your muscles from the intense training you perform as a powerlifter. As you probably already know, protein is the main nutrient responsible for increasing lean muscle tissue. You can work out all day long but if you don't eat the right amount of protein for your specific needs and activity expenditure, than you will never reach your peak in strength, that's guaranteed!

Use a Protein Supplement

In a time when most of us live very busy lives and are constantly are on the go, a protein supplement in the form of a meal replacement or protein shake is essential. If we take a look at one of the rules in part one of this series, it was to eat 5-6 small meals per day. Now, eating 6 solid meals of food per day for most people would be a major problem.

One way to make this much simpler is to eat your regular breakfast, lunch and dinner and have a protein shake in between each of those meals. I just made your life a lot easier didn't I? The fact is that we need at least one gram of protein per pound of bodyweight as powerlifters, especially when we are trying to go up a weight class. Now if you have ever looked at a macronutrient breakdown chart of different foods you will notice that to consume all the protein that you need on a daily basis is almost unrealistic, that is unless you have an appetite like mine.

When you look at the protein content of different foods and then you calculate how much you have to eat at your bodyweight, you then ask yourself, "How the heck am I supposed to get in all that protein without feeling like I just inhaled half of the country's livestock?" Having 2-3 protein shakes per day will help you fulfill your protein needs and will make your life in the kitchen a lot easier as well.

#5: Maximize your Carbohydrate Intake

Carbohydrates... You gotta love them. Yes we all know that they are definitely the tastiest of all the macronutrients, but how do we incorporate them in putting on size. If you are familiar with my previous articles "**The Carbohydrate Manifesto**" series, than you already know about the different types of carbohydrates and their function. Make sure that when you are trying to gain solid weight, you consume plenty carbs. Now don't think that there is only one way to do this. I have had great success with my clients using diets that include both carbs on a daily basis, and plans that restrict them for a certain number of days and then are super compensate for a specific number of days. What you need to know is that there is more than one way to get the job done.

Now when trying to put on size with a nutritional plan where carbs are going to be consumed on a daily basis, you should consume 1.5-3 grams of carbs per pound of bodyweight per day. You must be thinking, how can I eat all that? This doesn't all have to come from food, as there are many good glucose polymer drinks available that can help you fulfill your daily requirements. One glucose polymer drink can supply 100 grams of carbohydrates in as little as 12-16oz of water. I just made this a lot easier didn't I?

The majority of carbohydrates that you should consume when you are trying to go up a weight class should come from complex carbohydrates. These include oatmeal, whole wheat pasta, yams, brown rice, ancient grains including quinoa, amaranth, millet, and teff. I gave you an in depths look into these ancient grains in the last issue of PL USA. What's nice about these grains is that they provide variety in your diet and are an excellent source of complex carbohydrates.

Let's not forget your fibrous carbs including your salads and vegetables. These are very important and should be consumed with at least 3 of your daily meals. Fiber is very important in the digestion process and eliminating toxins from the body. If you are not getting adequate amounts of fiber in your nutritional plan, it is now time to increase your daily intake. It's hard to pack on size if you have a severe case of constipation. You may laugh, but this is one of the first things that happen to someone trying to gain weight. Many individuals increase their caloric and protein intake yet, they forget to do the same with their fiber and water.

#6: Consume Your Healthy Fats

Fat is where it's at, especially if you are a strength athlete. I know you get as sick and tired as I do of all those aerobicizers telling you that you should eat 10grams of fat per day. Your fat intake is definitely associated with how strong you will be. Fats should consist of 30% of your total caloric intake. This is not written in stone, as I have had my clients on programs that were higher and lower than the above. Good sources of Omega 3 fats are salmon and other cuts of fatty fish.

Now don't get the wrong idea here. This doesn't mean put extra Mayo on your tuna sandwich, or a quart of gravy on your turkey breast. Nor does it mean to put some extra non-dairy creamer in your coffee, or load up on fatty cuts of bacon and sausage. Yes, you want to increase your saturated fat intake slightly when trying to pack on size and gain muscle mass, but the majority should come from your polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, what is known in layman's terms as "Healthy Fats". These healthy fats include your Omega 3-6-9. The Omega 3 and 6 are known as polyunsaturated fats and the Omega 9 is known as monounsaturated fat. The Omega 3's are one of the most important since they have many benefits for the powerlifter. They increase insulin sensitivity, and reduce inflammation of your joints and tendons.

Your Omega 9's are important since they contain oleic acid which is known to keep the arteries of your heart supple, and they have a positive effect on your testosterone level. Carbohydrates and protein contain 4 calories per gram; while fat has over double that at 9 calories per gram. Not only will healthy fats help in many areas for health and strength, but they will provide an excellent source of calories. One tablespoon of flax or olive oil contains 114 calories and 14 grams of fat. Just say yes to healthy fats to keep your weight and total climbing!

#7: Eat a Big Breakfast

You must be thinking that the only thing on this guy's mind is food. Being a sports nutritionist, I usually eat 6-7 meals per day and in between I am discussing and counseling my athletes about proper meal planning. Yeah, I guess you are right. All I think about is food!

Breakfast is without a doubt one of the most important meals of the day. You should always eat a large breakfast as it is the base that will fuel you for the rest of the day. You have gone 8 hours during your sleep without food, so now is the time to fill up the tank with fuel once again before another long day of work and training.

A lot of people either skip their breakfast or eat such a skimpy breakfast it makes you wonder how they can even think and function at their job. Having a cup of coffee and a muffin is not considered a breakfast, especially not for a strength athlete.

At breakfast time you have to supply your body with a hearty source of complex and simple carbohydrates, and a nice portion of lean protein. A good example would be a large bowl of oatmeal with an apple and an egg white omelet. This is a breakfast, not that muffin and coffee joke that so many people fall in the trap of. The quality of your breakfast will have a direct effect on how efficient your metabolic rate works for the rest of the day.

Tip #8: Make sure your meals are balanced

“What type of balance are you talking about?” This refers to your macronutrient breakdown in each meal. Just as a refresher your macronutrients are your proteins, carbohydrates and fat. Each of your meal should be balanced in its proportion for each of the “Big Three”.

Now don't think that there is only one macronutrient ratio profile that is going to be optimal for everyone because there isn't. This is where a customized nutritional plan comes into play. Each person's metabolic rate, energy expenditure, insulin resistance and insulin sensitivity level are different, just to name a few variables. These all play a major role in designing a customized nutritional plan that is right for you. I can give one athlete a specific ratio of macronutrients and he will get ripped by following it. Yet another individual that I give the exact same plan to will cause an increase in his body fat level.

With this stated, I will at least give you something to start with as a base. First off, never just eat one macronutrient and consider it a meal. This means in layman's terms, don't go out and eat a pasta dinner with a nice half loaf of Italian bread. As you can see you are lacking protein and healthy fats in the meal. At the same time don't scarf down a can of tuna and call it a meal either.

A good example to follow for dinner would be a lean steak, a yam, and a serving of broccoli with olive oil. This is a balanced meal. Now, I would play with the ratios of the macronutrients to exact specifications and amounts to help you achieve your future goal according to your personal data for the different variables. See, I know how to make it look easy!

Tip # 9: Avoid Processed and Junk Foods

I know I will get a lot of flak for this one but I had to say it. When I hear most powerlifters discuss that they are going up a weight class it reminds me of children talking about how they are going to Disney Land. It's like they have just won the lottery. Just because you are going up a weight class doesn't mean you have a blank check to eat all the junk that you can get your hands on. I know this may sound funny, but it is a reality among a lot of powerlifters. Plain and simple, processed foods are not healthy for the body.

When you look back to our ancestors they ate mainly foods in a natural state. They didn't eat things like potato chips, chocolate tacos, ice cream, chocolate bars, deli meats, candy, and all the other junk foods that people go crazy for. Let's face reality for a second here, these “nutritious foods” may make you stronger in “**Bizarro World**”, but I am sad to tell you they won't help your total in this one! Not only will these foods add an extra roll of fat around your waist, they will also increase your chances for a whole slew of health conditions including heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes among others.

Tip #10: Optimize Your Post Workout Nutrition

Now when I say the words post workout nutrition, what comes to your mind? Is it go home and eat what ever you like? Is it to hit the local Ice cream shop for a double scoop of chocolate fudge layered in marshmallows and sprinkles? Or is it something you have systematically and scientifically planned out to make sure that you are providing your body with the nutrients that it needs to gain benefit from that crazy workout that you just did?

Now from most of the lifters that I have talked to, they don't have a clue what to eat after their workouts. They just go with the flow and eat whatever is lying around their house when they get home from their workouts, or whatever fast food drive thru is closest to the gym. This may sound funny but if this is you I will tell you straight. You are destroying all the hard work that you just performed by not supplying your body with what it needs at the most important time of the day. Post workout nutrition is much more complicated than just simply eating your piping hot dinner (what ever it may be) when you get home from the gym.

You have to supply your body with quality protein and carbohydrates along with a multitude of micronutrients and nutrient partitioning agents if you are looking to get the most from your training. In a future issue I will be discussing post workout nutrition and how it applies to the powerlifter. Just remember if you don't think that your post workout nutrition plan is optimal, it most likely is giving your competition a major advantage come contest day!

Stay Dedicated

Without dedication to not only your training but your nutritional and supplementation program, you will never see the results that you deserve. With powerlifters I have noticed that many will stick to the training program that they have laid out for their upcoming competition, but yet many get lazy when it is time to put the same effort forth for their nutritional program.

I am currently working with close to 25 of the best powerlifters on this planet both men and women. They include world and national champion lifters, as well as World record holders from the United States, Canada, and Europe. I am working with strength athletes at such an elite level you would think that they have basically reached their limit in terms of their potential. However, many of them are just scratching the surface in what they can accomplish in this sport. Many of them didn't have an optimal nutritional program when they came to me for counseling and program design.

The fact that I have seen many of my world class powerlifters make unbelievable gains in such a short time is due to the fact that once your nutritional plan is customized to your individual needs, the results will be very surprising! If customizing the plan of World class powerlifters is causing them to have exceptional gains and helping them overcome plateaus, just think of what optimizing your nutritional plan could do for you!

If you have any questions in regards to this article feel free to write me at ariccuto@nutritionxp3.com

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