# Fueling an Active Life After 40

EAT TO SUPPORT YOUR STRENGTH, ENERGY AND RECOVERY



NIKI WALKER FITNESS AND NUTRITION

SECTION 01

# Moving beyond mainstream advice

- Have you spent years believing that eating less and exercising more is the key to staying fit and healthy? Perhaps you exercise before breakfast, avoid carbohydrates, fear fats or feel that eating more might undo the benefits of your workout.
- For many women over 40, these habits are deeply ingrained. But as our bodies change, so too can our nutritional needs. This guide helps you rethink how you fuel your body — supporting your strength, energy, recovery and long-term health without restrictive dieting or complicated food rules.
- Over the past four decades, mainstream media and commercial weight-management programmes have largely promoted generalised calorie restriction and rigid dieting rules. These messages can create hesitation around certain food groups, portion sizes or eating before exercise.
- Every woman has a different training load, health history, lifestyle and nutritional needs. Effective nutrition means identifying what works for your body and activity levels, rather than following rules designed for someone else.

## Reframing how we approach food

Fuelling your body properly is not about adding extra work, complexity or personal sacrifice. It is about understanding what genuinely nourishes and sustains an active body.

THE TAKEAWAY

Sustainable nutrition means moving away from outdated rules of restriction and towards informed, individualised nourishment.

SECTION 02

# Exercising fasted vs. fuelled

- Many active women exercise first thing in the morning without eating, often out of habit or concern about weight management. Eating beforehand may be particularly helpful for more demanding sessions.
- Cortisol is a hormone involved in the stress response, energy regulation and the natural sleep-wake cycle. Levels typically rise around waking. During moderate-to-high-intensity exercise, training without eating beforehand may make exercise feel harder or reduce training quality for some women.
- Ageing and menopause-related hormonal changes may influence muscle maintenance and the response to exercise and protein intake. Adequate overall energy and protein, alongside resistance training, help support muscle maintenance. Fasted exercise does not automatically cause muscle loss.

## Training fasted

- Less readily available fuel during demanding sessions
- Exercise may feel harder
- Increased hunger or fatigue later in the day

## Training lightly fuelled

- More readily available energy
- Improved stamina and training quality
- Support for recovery and muscle maintenance as part of adequate daily nutrition

THE TAKEAWAY

Changing long-standing eating patterns takes patience, especially when unlearning years of restrictive habits. Rather than overhauling your entire diet at once, start by supporting your training sessions and observing how your body responds.

SECTION 03

# Protein and macronutrient balance

Maintaining health, supporting regular workouts and encouraging healthy body composition rely on an appropriate balance of all three macronutrients across the day.

## Protein

REPAIR & STRUCTURE

Supports muscle repair, bone health, connective tissue, immune function and fullness.

- Around 30-40g per main meal can be a useful starting point, depending on individual needs. Spread protein across the day.

## Carbohydrates

ENERGY & OUTPUT

Provide fuel for exercise, support brain function and replenish muscle glycogen.

- Include oats, seeded wholemeal bread, potatoes, rice, fruit and pulses around active parts of your day.

## Dietary fats

HORMONES & HEALTH

Support cell health, hormone production and absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K.

- Include olive oil, oily fish, nuts, seeds, eggs and avocado as part of balanced meals.

THE TAKEAWAY

Balancing all three macronutrients across the day supports strength, energy and recovery — rather than treating any one of them as the enemy.

SECTION 04

# Practical steps to fuel your training

STEP 1

## Pre-training fuel

15-45 minutes before morning exercise

**GOAL:** Provide easily digestible carbohydrate and some protein to support energy availability. A gentle walk before breakfast does not usually require pre-fuelling, whereas resistance training, running, cycling or fitness classes may benefit from eating beforehand.

- *Start with a small snack to build digestive comfort: half a small banana with 1 tbsp Greek yoghurt, one slice of wholemeal toast with a thin spread of peanut butter, or a small glass (150-200ml) of unsweetened soya milk.*
- *Target baseline (around 15g protein plus carbohydrate): 150g 0% Greek yoghurt with berries or half a banana; 2 boiled or scrambled eggs with half a slice of wholemeal toast; 125g cottage cheese on two oatcakes.*

STEP 2

## Post-training recovery meal

Within around 1-2 hours

**GOAL:** Aim for around 30-40g of protein alongside whole-food carbohydrates to support muscle repair and restore energy reserves, particularly if you trained before breakfast.

- *220g 0% Greek yoghurt with berries, 30g oats and 2 tbsp hemp hearts;*
- *3 scrambled or poached eggs on 2 slices of seeded wholemeal toast;*
- *Porridge made with 50g oats, 300ml soya milk and 1 scoop of whey or plant protein powder.*

STEP 3

## Your two-week fuelling check-in

Two weeks

Give yourself two weeks to explore how changes to your fuelling habits feel, while stepping away from daily scale weight. Notice practical markers of nourishment rather than expecting a particular outcome.

SECTION 05

# Your two-week check-in

Rate each area from 1 (poor) to 5 (very good) at the beginning and end of your two weeks.

| | Day 1 | Day 14 |
|---|---|---|
| Energy during exercise | | |
| Strength and stamina | | |
| Post-exercise recovery | | |
| Afternoon energy | | |
| Sleep quality | | |
| Confidence around food | | |

## Ready to feel stronger, better fuelled and more confident in your body?

Nutrition doesn't need to be complicated, restrictive or overwhelming. Together, we can build sustainable habits that support your strength, energy and recovery — without rigid food rules or unnecessary restrictions.

**Book your free consultation**

www.nikiwalkerfitnessandnutrition.co.uk

**Educational disclaimer:** This guide provides general lifestyle and nutritional education and does not constitute individual medical advice. Please consult your GP or registered healthcare provider regarding specific medical conditions or dietary requirements.