FUEL4MUSCLE x ASCETIC

THE ASCETIC CUT

8-WEEK NO-NONSENSE FAT-LOSS PLAYBOOK

No detox.
No metabolic loopholes.
No panic adjustments.
Just a system you can measure.

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SECTION 00

Read this before you start

This guide is deliberately less exciting than a miracle plan. That is the point. Fat loss is not unlocked by an insulin trick, a supplement or two punishment days. It comes from a weekly energy deficit that you can repeat while keeping enough protein, training stimulus and recovery to hold on to muscle.

The honest promise

Follow the process for eight weeks and you should know exactly what your body responds to. No honest guide can promise a six-pack: the result depends on your starting point, adherence, sleep, training, medication and health.

Do not use this as a DIY crash diet

- Do not start if you are under 18, pregnant, breastfeeding, underweight or have a current or previous eating disorder without appropriate professional support.
- Speak to a clinician first if you use insulin or glucose-lowering medicine, have kidney, liver or heart disease, uncontrolled blood pressure, unexplained weight loss or another major health condition.
- Stop and seek help for chest pain, fainting, severe breathlessness, confusion, persistent vomiting or signs of severe dehydration.
- Very-low-calorie diets around 800 kcal or below belong in specialist services. They are not a casual two-day challenge.

This is educational information, not a diagnosis or an individual treatment plan. NHS 111 can advise on urgent problems; call 999 for an emergency.

SECTION 01

The rules that actually matter

Everything else is a preference, a tool or a distraction. Start with the five rules below and earn the right to make the plan more complicated later.

RULE	FOCUS	WHAT IT MEANS
01	Energy deficit	Your weekly intake must be below your weekly expenditure. Fasting can change the schedule, not this rule.
02	Protein	Most active adults cutting weight do well around 1.6-2.2 g/kg/day. Use target body weight when current body weight is much higher.
03	Resistance training	Train hard enough to give the body a reason to retain muscle. Dieting without resistance work makes the scale less informative.
04	Movement	Keep everyday movement from quietly collapsing. Track steps and build from your own baseline.
05	Trend data	Use seven-day average weight, waist and adherence. One weigh-in is noise, not a decision.

Expected rate

The NHS suggests aiming for roughly 0.5-1 kg per week. Leaner, trained people often need the slower end to protect performance. Faster is not automatically better.

SECTION 02

Set starting calories without pretending the calculator is perfect

A calorie equation is a starting estimate. The fourteen-day trend is the calibration. Use the calculation, run it consistently, then let real data correct it.

Step A - estimate resting energy

Mifflin-St Jeor equation:

Men: BMR = 10 x weight kg + 6.25 x height cm - 5 x age + 5

Women: BMR = 10 x weight kg + 6.25 x height cm - 5 x age - 161

Step B - multiply BMR by an activity factor

LEVEL	FACTOR	DESCRIPTION
Mostly seated	1.20	Desk work, little planned exercise
Lightly active	1.35	Some walking, 1-3 sessions/week
Moderately active	1.50	Active job or 3-5 sessions/week
Very active	1.65	Physical job plus frequent hard training

Step C - create a 10-20% deficit. Start nearer 10% if already lean, training hard or sleeping poorly. Start nearer 20% if body fat is higher and hunger is manageable.

Example

90 kg man, 180 cm, age 39: estimated BMR 1,820 kcal. At a 1.5 activity factor, estimated maintenance is 2,730 kcal. A 15% starting deficit is about 2,320 kcal. This is a trial number, not a metabolic measurement.

SECTION 03

Build macros in the right order

Protein first. A sensible fat floor second. Carbohydrate gets the remaining calories. This keeps the maths simple and supports training.

TARGET	STARTING RANGE	PRACTICAL RULE
Protein	1.6-2.2 g/kg target body weight	Use 2.0-2.2 when lean, very active or in a larger deficit.
Fat	Usually 20-35% of calories	Do not force fat extremely low. Prefer oily fish, olive oil, nuts, seeds and eggs.
Carbohydrate	Calories left after protein and fat	Place more around hard training if it improves performance.
Fibre	Work towards 30 g/day	Increase gradually and drink enough fluid.

Protein distribution

- Use 3-5 protein feedings across the day.
- For most adults, 25-50 g per meal is a useful practical range depending on body size.
- Whole food first. Whey or another protein powder is convenience, not a fat burner.
- If high body fat makes grams per kilogram excessive, calculate from a realistic target body weight.

What we removed from the source plan

No 3.3-4.4 g/kg protein target. No claim that a +200 kcal day is preferentially pushed into muscle because insulin was 'reset'. No claim that ketosis creates meaningful fat loss by wasting ketones. Those details sounded technical but overreached the evidence.

SECTION 04

Use a chef's meal structure

You do not need separate diet food. You need repeatable plates with clear portions, enough volume and flavours you will still tolerate in week seven.

MEAL	BASE	CONTROL POINT
Breakfast	Greek yoghurt, oats, berries, whey or eggs	Build 30-45 g protein; weigh calorie-dense extras.
Lunch	Chicken, turkey, lean beef or tofu + rice/potato + greens	Half the plate vegetables when practical.
Dinner	Lean protein + high-volume vegetables + measured carbohydrate	Use FitChef-style spice blends, acids and herbs instead of pouring calories.
Snack	Fruit + cottage cheese, skyr, yoghurt or a shake	Choose it because the day needs it, not because it is labelled healthy.

Approximate 2,000 kcal example

- Meal 1: 300 g 0% Greek yoghurt, 50 g oats, 150 g berries, 20 g whey.
- Meal 2: 180 g cooked chicken breast, 180 g cooked jasmine rice, 250 g mixed vegetables, measured sauce.
- Meal 3: 170 g 5% beef mince, 300 g potatoes, large salad, 10 g olive oil.
- Snack: fruit and 200 g cottage cheese or skyr.
- Adjust portions to your calorie target. Brand labels and cooking methods change the numbers.

SECTION 05

The shopping list

Buy food that can become two or three different meals. Variety belongs in seasoning and sides; the protein base can stay simple.

AISLE	BUY
Lean protein	Chicken breast, turkey mince, 5% beef mince, white fish, tuna, prawns, eggs/egg whites, skyr, Greek yoghurt, cottage cheese, tofu, whey.
Carbohydrate	Jasmine or basmati rice, potatoes, oats, wholegrain bread or wraps, pasta, beans, fruit.
Vegetables	Frozen mixed vegetables, broccoli, peppers, onions, mushrooms, salad leaves, tomatoes, courgette, cabbage.
Fats	Olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocado, oily fish. Measure oils and nut butter; healthy calories still count.
Flavour	Dry spices, garlic, ginger, chilli, vinegar, citrus, mustard, herbs, reduced-sugar sauces, salt as appropriate.
Emergency food	Cooked chicken, tuna tins, microwave rice, frozen veg, skyr and fruit. A five-minute meal prevents a delivery-app collapse.

Chef rule

Cook protein and carbohydrate in batches, but finish each portion differently: curry spices and lime, smoked paprika and tomato, garlic-herb yoghurt, chilli and soy. Adherence dies when every box tastes identical.

SECTION 06

Three-day strength plan

The goal during fat loss is not to burn maximum calories in the gym. It is to maintain or improve strength with recoverable volume.

DAY	WORK
A	Squat or leg press 3x6-10; bench press 3x6-10; row 3x8-12; Romanian deadlift 2x8-10; lateral raise 2x12-20; plank 3 sets
B	Deadlift or hip hinge 3x5-8; overhead press 3x6-10; pulldown 3x8-12; split squat 2x8-12/leg; curl + triceps 2x10-15
C	Hack squat or leg press 3x8-12; incline dumbbell press 3x8-12; chest-supported row 3x8-12; hip thrust 2x8-12; calves 3x10-15; loaded carry

- Leave roughly 1-3 good repetitions in reserve on most working sets.
- When all sets reach the top of the rep range with clean form, add the smallest sensible load.
- If recovery falls, remove one set per exercise before turning every workout into light cardio.
- Add 150 minutes/week of moderate activity for health, but build gradually from current capacity.

Steps

Measure your normal seven-day step average first. Add about 1,500-2,000 daily steps if needed. Do not jump from 3,000 to 15,000 and pretend it is sustainable.

SECTION 07

The eight-week execution plan

Eight weeks is long enough to generate useful data and short enough to stay focused. Each phase has one job.

WHEN	JOB	ACTION
Week 0	Baseline	Track normal food, morning weight and steps for 7 days. Measure waist. Do not 'eat clean' for the data.
Weeks 1-2	Calibration	Run starting calories, protein and three training sessions. Do not change the plan because of three flat days.
Weeks 3-4	First decision	Compare seven-day averages. Adjust only if adherence was at least 85% and the trend missed target for two weeks.
Weeks 5-6	Protect performance	Keep load and technique. Add a maintenance-calorie day only if it helps adherence; it is not a metabolism reset.
Weeks 7-8	Finish and audit	No panic cardio. Repeat the process, then compare waist, average weight, photos, strength and adherence.

Weekly non-negotiables

- 3 resistance sessions
- Protein target on at least 6 of 7 days
- Daily steps tracked
- 7-9 hours sleep opportunity where life allows
- Morning weight on at least 4 days
- Waist measured once under the same conditions

SECTION 08

The adjustment algorithm

This is where most people sabotage themselves: they change calories after one meal, one weigh-in or one stressful day. Use the sequence below instead.

DATA	DECISION
Trend is falling 0.5-1%/week; training okay	Hold calories and steps. Do not fix what is working.
Trend is flat for 1 week	Hold. Check sodium, digestion, cycle, sleep and adherence.
Trend is flat for 2 weeks; adherence 85%+	Reduce 100-150 kcal/day OR add 1,500-2,000 steps/day. Choose one.
Loss exceeds 1%/week; performance/recovery falling	Add 100-150 kcal/day and reassess for 7-14 days.
Hunger is extreme; adherence collapsing	Use higher-volume food, redistribute calories, consider 1-2 maintenance days, then resume.

Use averages

Daily weight = weather. Seven-day average = climate. Compare this week's average with last week's average. Waist and training performance prevent the scale from becoming the only judge.

SECTION 09

Fasting, diet breaks and supplements

These are optional tools. None of them can rescue poor weekly execution.

Intermittent fasting

Use a shorter eating window if fewer meals make calorie control easier. Do not use it if it causes evening bingeing, weak training or obsessive restriction. Research generally finds intermittent and continuous restriction produce comparable weight loss when the energy deficit is comparable.

Maintenance days

A maintenance day can improve training, social flexibility and adherence. It is not a licence for an uncontrolled cheat day and it does not erase the week's deficit. Keep protein the same and add most calories through carbohydrate if training performance is the reason.

Supplements

- Protein powder: convenience only.
- Creatine monohydrate: 3-5 g/day can support strength and training. Initial water-weight gain is not fat.
- Caffeine: optional; keep dose sensible and protect sleep.
- Vitamin/mineral supplements: solve a demonstrated need or follow public-health guidance. Do not build a fat-loss plan around a bottle.
- Fat burners: not required. Appetite, sleep, blood pressure and anxiety costs often matter more than the small effect.

SECTION 10

Eight-week scorecard

Print this page or rebuild it in your notes. Score execution before judging the plan.

WK	AVG KG	WAIST	AVG STEPS	LIFTS	SLEEP	ADHERENCE
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

End-of-week audit

- Did I hit calories within a sensible margin on at least 6 days?
- Did I hit protein on at least 6 days?
- Did I complete the planned resistance sessions?
- Did steps collapse compared with baseline?
- Did I sleep enough to make the plan realistic?
- Does the two-week trend require a change - or am I reacting emotionally?

The rule

If adherence is below 85%, do not cut calories. Fix execution. A harsher plan applied badly is not a better plan.

SECTION 11

Frequently asked questions

Do I need breakfast?

No. Meal timing should support adherence and training. Breakfast is useful for some and unnecessary for others.

Do carbs stop fat loss?

No. Excess weekly energy stops fat loss. Carbohydrate can support hard training; portion size still matters.

Can I eat out?

Yes. Use a lean protein-led meal, choose one major calorie extra, estimate honestly and return to normal at the next meal.

Why did weight rise overnight?

Water, glycogen, sodium, digestion and inflammation can move scale weight quickly. Fat gain requires a meaningful energy surplus over time.

Should I do fasted cardio?

Only if you prefer it. It is not consistently superior for fat loss when total energy balance is matched.

What happens after week eight?

If more loss is appropriate, take a 1-2 week maintenance phase when needed, then run another measured block. If the goal is reached, raise calories gradually to estimated maintenance and keep tracking the trend.

SECTION 12

Evidence and sources

This is not a reference dump designed to look clever. These sources support the practical boundaries used in the guide.

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4. Helms ER et al. A systematic review of dietary protein during caloric restriction in resistance-trained lean athletes. Int J Sport Nutr Exerc Metab. 2014;24:127-138. PMID:24092765.

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7. NHS. How to get more fibre into your diet. Adult target 30 g/day. https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/digestive-health/how-to-get-more-fibre-into-your-diet/

8. NHS Every Mind Matters. Sleep problems. Most healthy adults need around 7-9 hours. https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/sleep/

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10. Mifflin MD et al. A new predictive equation for resting energy expenditure in healthy individuals. Am J Clin Nutr. 1990;51:241-247. doi:10.1093/ajcn/51.2.241

Final word

Make the plan boring enough to repeat and precise enough to audit. Consistency is not motivational language; it is the mechanism.