CONSISTENT HEALTHY FOOD TRACKING

Tracking Your Food Is Irritating

Who wants to enter every little thing they eat into an app every day? Who has the time to track all their food? It's no longer enjoyable when I have to think about entering everything I put in my mouth, into an app. These are all the things I've heard people say when I ask them if they track what they eat. They are also the exact same things I used to say when I felt this way. It was absolutely irritating to have to do this at first, but once I created the habit, it became easy.

The Austrian management consultant, educator and author Peter Drucker, also known as the man who invented modern business management, said, "If you can't measure it, you can't improve it." While he was referring to business when he said this, the same holds true for anything you want to improve in your life. Imagine wanting to become a faster long-distance runner but never keeping track of your mile time? Or maybe wanting to improve your golf handicap but never keeping track of your score? The same goes for diet; if you don't plan out what you will put in your body, how can you know if it's the right thing? How do you know if you are having too much or too little? Our minds deceive us when it comes to our desires with food, which is what makes tracking so important.

I am not a nutritionist, nor would I claim to be. What I have learned to do has worked for me and I've seen it work very well for others. If you are concerned about creating a healthy nutrition plan for yourself, speak with a licensed nutritionist. I share the ideas and methods in this document to drive the concept of consistency, not as legitimate nutrition advice.

How I Did It - 2015

One thing I know for certain is that without long term consistency, nothing is sustainable. The first time I used food tracking as a method of losing weight was in 2015, and I did it simply by counting calories. I didn't care how much protein, fat or carbohydrates I ate, as long as I kept my calorie count low. I began using the Lose It! App, which can be downloaded from the Apple Store or Google Play store. When I first began using Lose It!, I would enter every food item before I consumed it, never after. The reason I did this was

to be sure I knew exactly what I was going to eat before I ate it. This helped me create a plan that was balanced. If I made a choice to eat what I want and then add it later, it would throw off my balance and I might end up extremely hungry at the end of the night. This leads to late night cravings and choosing to eat foods high in carbohydrates too close to bedtime.

In 2015, I was eating a lot of processed foods and a lot of carbs, and I still lost weight. My frame of mind was that if I kept my calorie deficit around 500 calories (total calories burned – total calories consumed), I would lose weight, and I did. At the time, I did not speak with a licensed nutritionist about my plan for weight loss. From July to December, I lost approximately 40 lbs using this method. I should also mention that I did not have more than 2 alcoholic drinks per week, and I walked 3 miles a day, 5 days a week.

How I Did It – 2018

In 2018, I had regained most of the weight I had lost back in 2015. Stress from work and unhealthy habits like alcohol and takeout food had once again taken ahold of me. I stopped tracking my food in 2016 after I had lost the weight and that made it easy to regress. In June of 2018, I once again picked up the Lose It! App and started to track my food. This time I had the help of a personal trainer who also works with licensed nutritionists. Instead of just tracking my calories, I learned the importance of balancing my macronutrients (protein, fat and carbs). Because I was working out several days a week and was focused on losing body fat, we balanced my macros in a 40/30/30 ratio (protein/fat/carbs).

By 2019, I had dropped to 159 lbs and 12% body fat, and we changed to a 33/33/33 ratio for maintenance and muscle building. At the time, people (like my wife) told me that I looked way too thin, which I probably did. It was important to remove the fat before we focused on long term muscle building. At the time, I stopped tracking my food for several months. I had the belief system that it was no longer necessary because I had reached my goal weight and now I could stop worrying about it.

When the COVID lockdowns came in 2020, I began drinking more alcohol and worrying less about my diet. I could feel myself regressing again and so I quickly picked up the Lose It! App and started tracking again. Since mid 2020, I have continued to track all my food using the Lose It! App. There are off-days and I sometimes I do forget, but overall, I remain consistent. If I miss a meal of tracking, I get right back on it and keep going. This has continued to work for me, and the act of tracking no longer bothers me. I know that I have a great system to keep my food balanced and only eat what I need. When I fall of the horse, cause we all do, that system gets me right back on track.
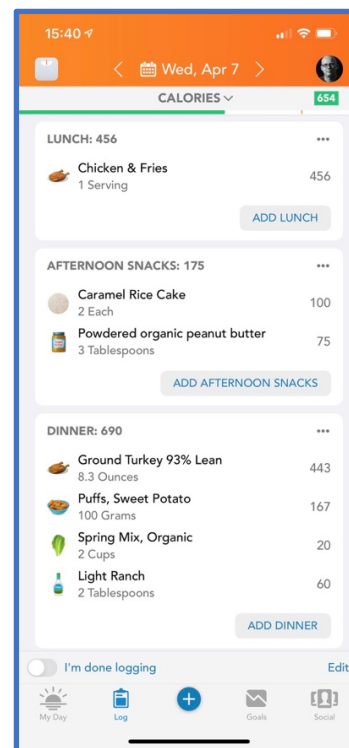
How I Use the Lose It! App

Macronutrient Tracking

In this screenshot, you can see my balanced macros. The app gives you the ability to see a macronutrient breakdown by meal and by day.
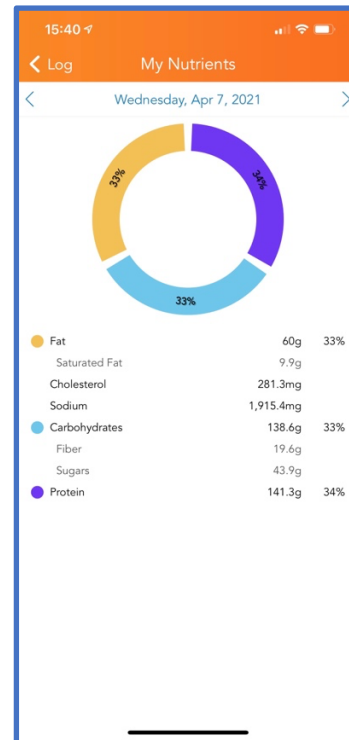

Entering Meals

Food can be entered by each meal including breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner and any time snacks.

Fitness Tracker Integration

While I use an Apple Watch, other fitness trackers also integrate with Lose It! like Fitbit. This is helpful because it enables a projected burn value. This helps me to understand days where I have had increased movement and may need to consume additional calories.
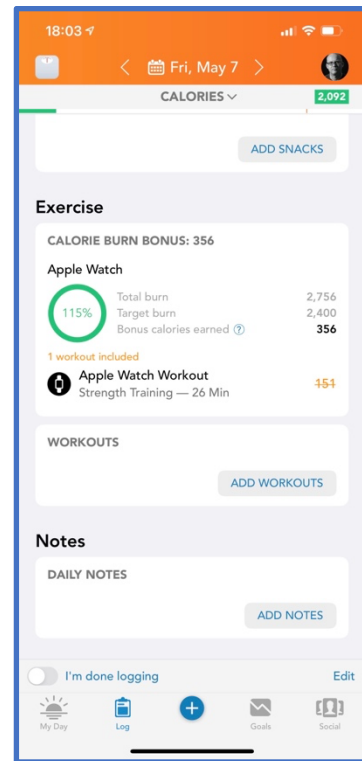
Water Intake and Steps

When using a fitness tracker, the app will also show you your step count. Water intake is also a feature and is very helpful to make sure I am staying hydrated.
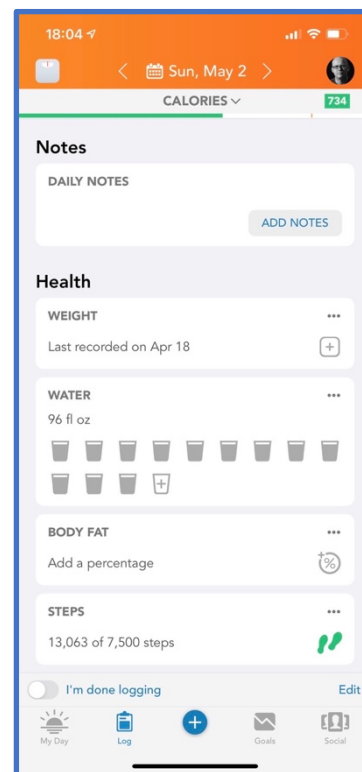
Lose It! Gotchas.

Incorrect Food Items

As much as I love this app and as much as it has helped me manage my food, there are some gotchas that you should be aware of. The app allows anyone who is using it to add food items to their database, which means you need to be extremely cognizant of choosing items you did not enter yourself. I've often found that many of the macronutrients on publicly available food items are incorrect. You need to do your own due diligence and make sure your nutrients are correct.

Workout Calorie Bonuses

When you exercise and the burned calories from those exercises sync into the app, they will increase your total allowed calories. I disable this because my calorie burn should be calculated based on my total movement for the day. There is a feature for every workout called "Exclude from Total" where the calories burned from that exercise are not counted toward your total burn.