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Wants to build muscle mass through weight lifting and a healthy diet ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am a 29 year old woman. I am interested in increasing my muscle mass. Could you please tell me what steps to take in weight lifting as well as in changing my eating habits for a healthier diet?

Answer

Dear Reader,

A healthy, varied diet of nutritious foods along with an appropriate exercise program can help get your bod in buff condition; however, remember that women in general do not bulk up to the same degree as many men do when they work out to increase muscle mass.

The road to muscle mass must begin with a sound weight training program. A program of lifting every other day, or doing a lower body workout one day and an upper body workout the other day, is recommended. The minimum frequency is two times a week. Remember, never work the same muscle group two days in a row. Your muscles need 24 to 48 hours of recovery time before the next life. In lifting weights to build muscle mass and strength, research supports three sets of 8 to 12 repetitions max. (This means you can't lift the 13th time.) If you are a beginner, begin at a weight that you can lift 15 times before feeling fatigue, and gradually increase the weight and decrease the repetitions as the weeks go by. For more information on weight lifting, read [Weight training: Do I need to change my workout to see results?](#) ^[2] and [Weightlifting and still fat](#) ^[3].

Adding aerobic activity to your weight lifting workouts will help reduce body fat stores. An aerobic workout of 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week is your target. Of course, you can build up to that ideal over time. For more information on aerobic exercise, read [Minimum and maximum heart rate and aerobic exercise](#) ^[4].

Search through [Go Ask Alice!'s Nutrition & Physical Activity](#) [5] archive for questions and answers that describe how to eat a healthy diet; in particular, read [Food Guidelines — How much is a serving?](#) [6]. The [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) [7] also has information on what types of foods might help support healthy muscle mass, like complex carbohydrates and foods with healthy fats.

Good luck on your road to more muscle mass!

Alice!

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