

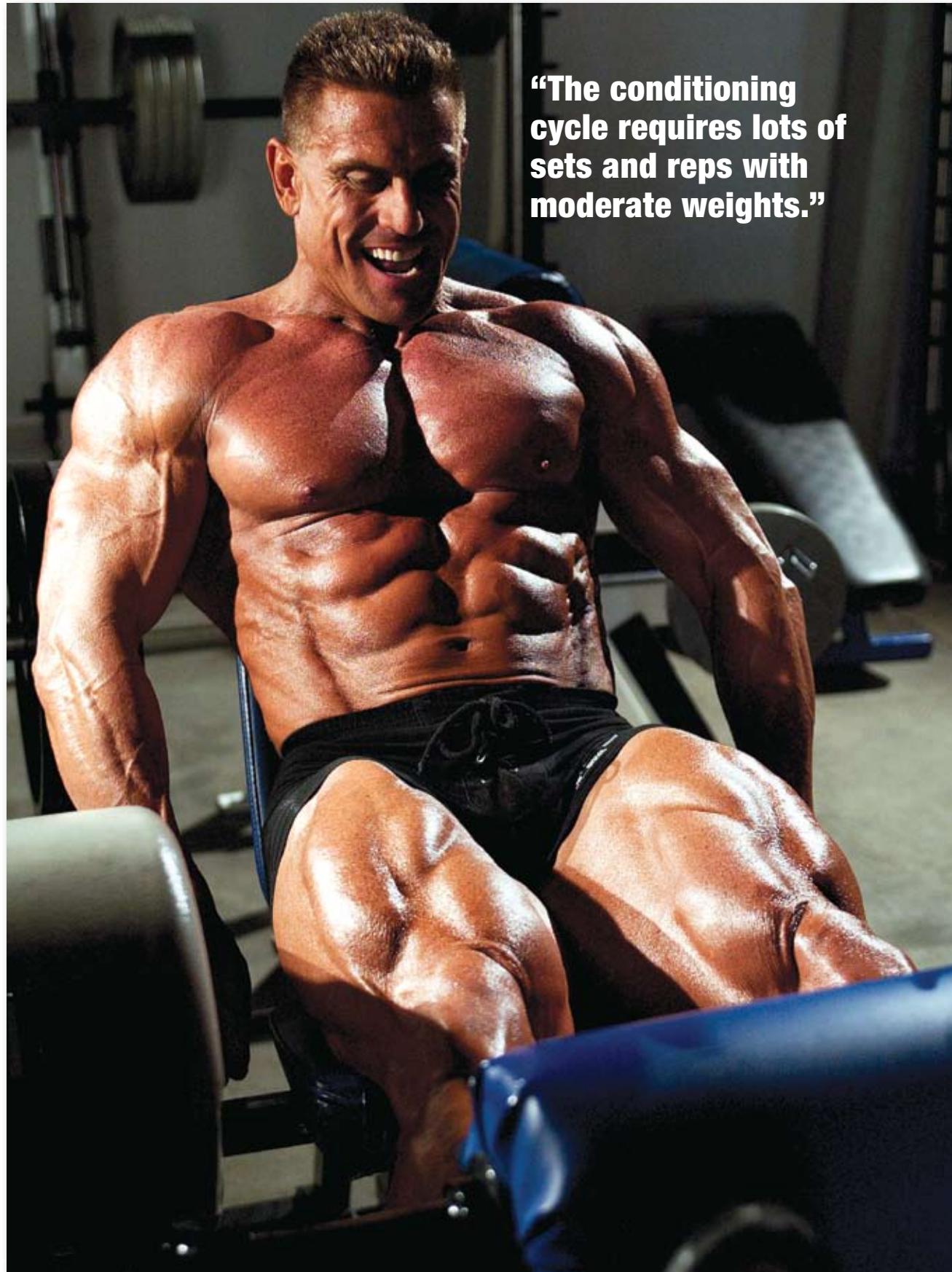
# Condition Magician

46-Year-Old Lee Apperson Reveals  
How the Average Joe Can Transform  
Himself at Any Age **by David Young - Photography by Michael Neveux**

**L**ee Apperson has a reputation as one of the most conditioned athletes in bodybuilding. That's pretty impressive by itself, but when you consider his age and his competitive history, it's off-the-hook amazing!

That's why I jumped all over the chance to interview him for *IRON MAN*. As I'd just turned 50 and had plans of getting in my best shape ever for spring, I guessed that Lee would be a great source of helpful tips and inspiration. My guess was flat-out accurate. Of course, I already knew that he's 46, weighs 253 at 6'2"—and is usually ripped.





**“The conditioning cycle requires lots of sets and reps with moderate weights.”**

### Lee Apperson's Contest History

'84 AAU Mr. Auburndale, 2nd  
'85 NPC Mr. Space Coast, 1st  
'85 NPC Mr. Manatee County, 2nd  
'86 NPC Central Florida, 2nd  
'86 NPC Mr. Daytona, 1st  
'87 NPC Seminole Classic, 1st  
'87 NPC Mr. Florida, 8th  
'87 AAU Mr. Tampa, 1st  
'88 NPC Southern Natural, 1st  
'88 NPC Southern Gold Cup, 6th  
'88 NPC Southeastern Gold Cup, 2nd  
'89 NPC Birmingham Championships, 1st  
'89 Southeastern USA, 3rd  
'89 Southeast Regionals, 1st  
'90 Musclemania, San Diego, 5th  
'91 NPC Junior USA, 2nd  
'91 NPC Nationals, 15th  
'92 NPC Junior Nationals, 10th  
'92 NPC Ironman, 6th  
'92 NPC Nationals, 15th  
'93 AAU Mr. America, 2nd  
'94 AAU Mr. America, 1st  
'95 AAU Mr. America, 1st  
'96 NABBA USA, 1st  
'96 NABBA Universe, 8th  
'97 NABBA Universe, 7th  
'98 NPC Masters Nationals, 1st  
'99 IFBB Masters Mr. Olympia, 9th  
'00 IFBB Masters Mr. Olympia, 11th  
'01 IFBB Masters Mr. Olympia, 8th  
'02 IFBB Masters Mr. Olympia, 14th  
'03 IFBB Masters Mr. Olympia, 15th

#### **DY: Can you help me, Lee?**

**LA:** In my 25 years of competition I've experimented with different types of workouts, and I've developed many ideas that can help you take your body to the next level.

#### **DY: Sounds good, but let's start at the beginning. In developing a physique for bodybuilding, how long does it take to build the foundation?**

**LA:** Three to five years—sometimes longer. In those years you concentrate on the basic exercises with free weights. After that you should cycle your yearly training.

#### **DY: How does that work?**

**LA:** In a nutshell you train three to four months focusing on conditioning and basic strength. Then you go three months doing all strength training. Next you go to a full precontest bodybuilding routine for three to four months to really shape up. Then you repeat the cycle, year after year. Each year you attempt to hit a peak of strength during the power phase and a peak of looking great during the precontest phase and a peak of cardio fitness during the conditioning-and-basic-strength phase. Years ago during that phase I did 33 chins in a set. On the second set I did 26. My conditioning was superb at that time.

#### **DY: I'd say so. Tell me about size and strength training.**

**LA:** That's a long cycle purely because you want to go for strength and size over an extended period. You stay on it for months or years till you max out on gains and go completely stale. You make very small weight additions to the bar on basic exercises like squats and deadlifts, training once or twice a week. I'm talking about *very* small increments—eight ounces to a pound at most—so small,

**“Each year you attempt to hit a peak of strength.”**



## Over-40 Muscle Building

There's no doubt that once you get past 40, you have to pay more attention to detail if you want to build muscle—things like better nutrition, joint care and energy conservation. No, I'm not talking about buying an electric car. I'm talking about making every set count toward building muscle so you have more energy left for growth.

For example, extended sets are very important for the over-40 bodybuilder, as Lee Apperson says in his interview. He rests very little between sets and sometimes groups many exercises for the same bodypart in a giant set, getting more work done in less time and going for the burn. Searing the muscle with that type of training is key for us old guys because research has shown that muscle burn can cause growth hormone surges. After you hit 40, growth hormone is on a downward spiral, so anything you can do to increase it will improve your muscle-building and fat-burning potential. (Put away the blowtorch; I'm talking about an internal burn caused by lactic acid buildup and oxygen deprivation.)

While Apperson's techniques get the job done, I've found that a better, more efficient way to extend a set for me is with X Reps, a power-partial technique we're experimenting with here at the *IRON MAN* Training & Research Center. By doing short five-to-10-inch movements at the end of a set, right at the spot on the stroke where maximum force generation is possible, you can get more fast-twitch-fiber activation; semistretch overload, which has been linked to hyperplasia, or fiber splitting; and muscle burn. (For more info visit [www.x-rep.com](http://www.x-rep.com).)

For example, on incline presses, when you can't get another full rep, lower the bar to a point between the midpoint of the stroke and the bottom position. Now pulse and feel your upper chest firing for all its worth. You should be able to do about six of those, which will trigger

some incredible firepower. It's usually difficult to get a good burn on compound exercises, but X Reps make that important phenomenon happen whenever you want it to.

The technique works. It did amazing things for me in only one month, and I'm in my mid-40s.

No matter what your age, you should give X Reps a test run

on at least one set of a few exercises. You'll be amazed at the muscle-building, fat-burning results you get in a very short period. I'm still stunned at the results I got with them.

—Steve Holman

**Editor's note:** For more information on X Reps, including X Q&As and past ITRC e-newsletters, visit [www.x-rep.com](http://www.x-rep.com).



**Steve Holman, age 44, got incredible results in only one month after he started extending his sets with a burn-inducing power-partial technique.**

the change in weight is often imperceptible. After you break into this schedule, you will find yourself training at your maximum weights for quite a period of time.

Let's say you started at a 200-pound bench for six reps. In six months you'd be at a 230-plus bench for six reps or more. In a year you'd have a 300 bench. You can really build up training like that, but you have to recover fully between workouts, or you won't grow.

Sometimes you need a week of rest after workouts. If you're squatting hundreds of pounds for reps, you'll need that much time to recover and grow. Many people return to the gym before growth happens. That type of training is fun and productive, but it's very hard work because you train with your max weights and add eight ounces to a pound each week for as long as the cycle lasts.

### DY: Can you be a little more specific about the training techniques used?

**LA:** Sure. Each month you start off using weights that are moderate for you. Train hard for the first week with those weights but not to the ragged edge. In week two increase the weight and use techniques to raise the intensity. Your reps should be in the four-to-eight range. You still hold back, and then in week three you blast away.

Give the workout 100 percent! Train till you drop. Train with all-out focus and push hard! Those should be the gut-busting workouts of the month. If you can't use heavier weights, use techniques to raise the intensity. In week four back off and either rest totally or train moderately for four to seven days.

During this cycle you perform basic exercises using heavy weights and high intensity, resting two to three days or more between workouts. Generally, you train each bodypart twice every seven to eight days.

The workout is designed around these basic exercises: squats, deadlifts, rows, bench presses and barbell shoulder presses.

### DY: What happens during the conditioning cycle?

**LA:** That type of training requires lots of sets and reps using moderate



Equipment: Powertec power rack, 1-800-447-0008

**"The power cycle is built around basic exercises."**

weights. You do two to five exercises for each bodypart with lots of sets—and do cardio daily, pacing yourself. Then once a week you do cardio twice in a day and really push yourself.

I don't have a set training schedule during this phase or during the precontest phase. I go into the gym, and I train whichever bodypart I feel like training. I never do the same exercises for a bodypart again—at least not in the same order. For example, if I do dumbbell incline presses during today's chest workout, I might not do them for another month.

### DY: What about the pre-contest phase? You're known for your tremendous condition onstage. What's the first consideration?

**LA:** Calories. The number of calories you burn each day varies

depending on bodyweight, body composition, metabolism and activity level.

More important than how many calories you take in is what you eat. You can't carry muscle and get ripped while eating junk food. If you don't eat clean for a long period of time—months—you won't lose the fat and become truly ripped.

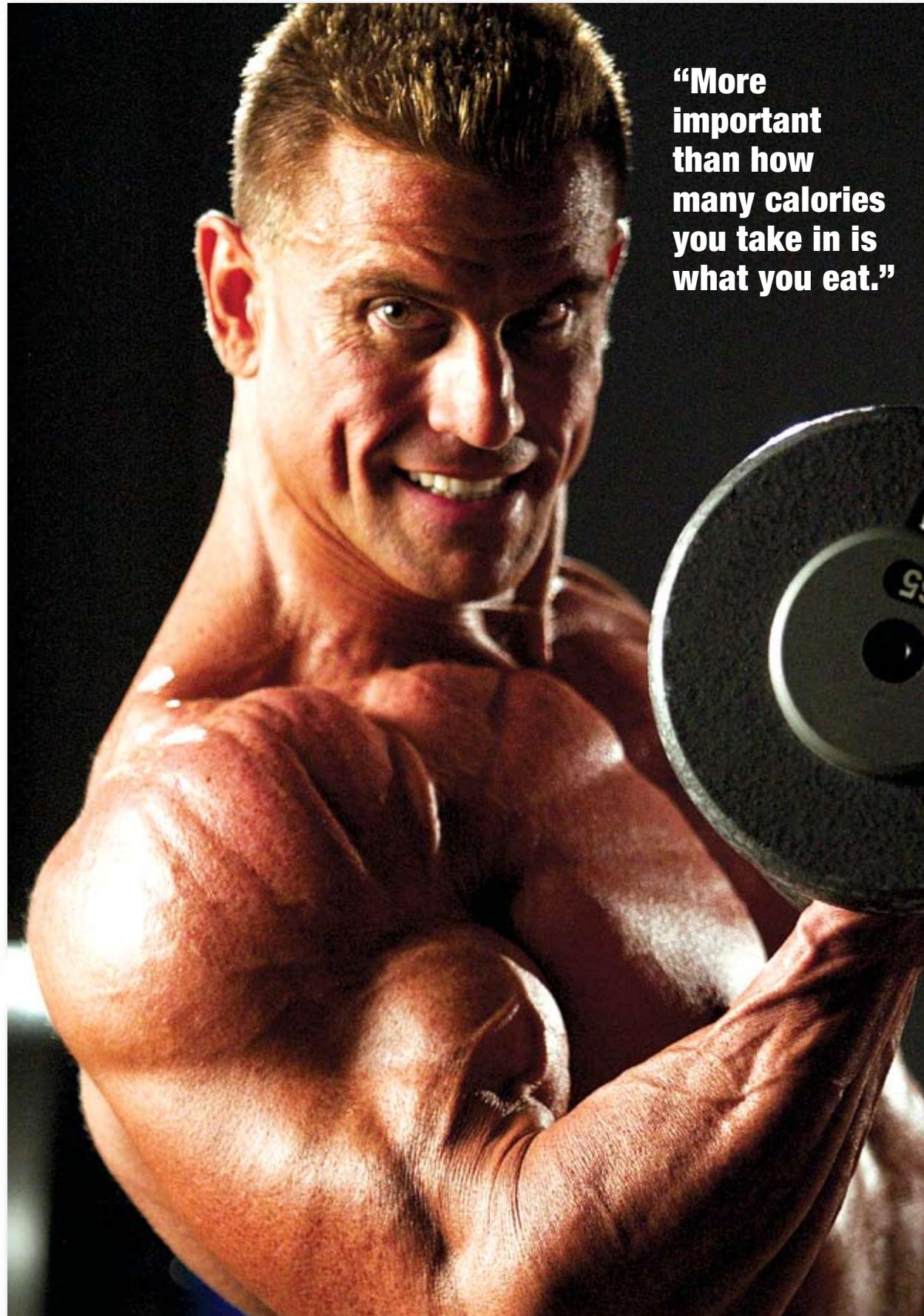
Many people have no idea how many calories they require simply to maintain their weight, and as a result they tend to cut calories too much when they attempt to lose bodyfat. There's a rule of thumb for estimating how many calories you burn at rest. For men: Add a zero to your weight and then add twice your weight. For women: Add a zero to your weight and then add your weight.

So if you weigh 175 pounds, your expected resting calorie needs are 2,100 a day (175 becomes 1,750, and

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**"My all-time-favorite technique is the extended set. I recommend it over forced reps."**

**“More important than how many calories you take in is what you eat.”**



to that add two times 175, or 350, for a total of 2,100).

That's an estimate of what it would take to maintain your weight if you did nothing but vegetate. To determine total calorie needs, you have to add calories for general activity and exercise. With your desk job and workouts, you probably burn half of your resting needs, or 1,050. That gives you a total of 3,150 calories (2,100 plus 1,050 equals 3,150). If you were engaged in a regular aerobic exercise program, you would require more calories. On the average, walking or jogging a mile takes about 100 calories.

As a general frame of reference, you'll be interested to know that,

according to the National Research Council, the average woman (5'4", medium frame, not too thin, not too fat) who does not exercise needs 1,600 to 2,400 calories a day to maintain bodyweight. The average man requires 2,300 to 3,000 calories a day.

Find your calorie level, and maintain an eating journal, counting your calories carefully. Start off with a slight calorie deficit of 200 and work with that as long as possible. Several months of daily aerobics and that slight calorie-deficit diet will take off the bodyfat.

**DY: How does your contest diet work?**

**LA:** Plan to diet for four to eight months. Eat 30 grams of **protein** every three hours, five or more

times every day. You should get about one to two grams of **protein** for each pound you weigh each day over a minimum of five **protein** meals throughout the day. Try to eat three times before noon. **Protein shakes** can help you achieve your daily **protein** requirement.

Everything else you eat should be clean complex carbs, such as brown rice, corn, vegetables, whole-grain oatmeal, pasta and fruit.

Drink water all day. It's the best fat burner I know. Drink, drink, drink!

Eliminate dairy products in the final months or weeks and replace them with other **protein** sources that are free of carbs and fats.

Limit your carbs to two to four servings of 100 grams per day; that is, between 200 and 400 total grams of carbs a day. Eat all your carbs before 3 p.m., getting the majority of them early in the day. Make breakfast, midmorning and lunch—to a lesser degree—the biggest carb meals of the day.

I eat a lot. I don't like being hungry. I'd rather eat an extra 500 calories a day and do an aerobic session to burn it than be hungry. Amazingly, the more you eat clean, the more bodyfat you'll lose. The body does not hoard fat when you're eating a lot and being active.

Keep fats as low as you can go. There are fats in meats, nuts and dairy products and many other foods, so you have to be aware of how much fat you're taking in. I recommend 50 to 100 grams a day.

And always take a **protein-and-carb** meal or drink within 30 minutes after you train—even if it's at night.

Eat salads and fibrous carbs daily. They have almost no calories and help your body stay healthy. You can eat salads containing carrots, lettuce, spinach, cucumber, radish, tomato, celery and other raw vegetables and even cooked green vegetables in large quantities without any negative effects. Consider them zero calories.

**DY: Do you recommend restricting certain foods or food groups?**

**LA:** Absolutely. Avoid juice, bread, pasta and other simple sugars and carbs. Fruit is okay with breakfast (like a banana, orange or melon),

but I might eliminate it completely during the last weeks and replace it with a more complex carb like oatmeal. If you eat breads and pastas, try to eliminate them the last month (at least) before a show and switch to other carb sources.

During the last month or weeks eliminate sauces like ketchup, mustard, dressings, fake butters, flavored rices and so on as well. Also eliminate **protein** shakes and replace them with solid-**protein** foods like chicken or fish.

### **DY: Please describe a typical day of eating.**

**LA:** Sure. This diet has 425 grams of **protein**, 179 grams of carbs and 70 grams of fat:

#### **Meal 1**

Egg whites  
Oatmeal  
Fruit  
**Protein shake**

#### **Meal 2**

Filet mignon  
Potato  
Whole-wheat toast

#### **Meal 3**

Egg whites  
Green salad  
**Protein shake**

#### **Meal 4**

Grilled fish  
Brown rice  
Green vegetable

#### **Meal 5**

Egg whites  
Oatmeal  
**Protein shake**

#### **Meal 6**

Grilled chicken  
Egg whites

### **DY: Lee, do you have any other tips?**

**LA:** Yes. I mentioned this earlier, but you need mix up the order of the exercises. Do exercises that you aren't used to but that are similar to movements you currently perform. If you usually do slant-board leg raises for abs, switch to hanging leg raises.



**“Do straight sets at one workout; then the next time do all supersets.”**

You'll feel a burn like it was your first day in the gym.

Line up four exercises or more, either all for the same bodypart or different ones. Then go at it. Do one exercise after another with no rest. I love to train that way, and about 75 percent of all my training is some version of the no-rest routine. Why rest? I get bored waiting for a bodypart to recover enough for me to work it again. I like to pound on a part like legs by performing squats, straight-legged deadlifts and leg extensions as one giant set until my legs are toast.

Another favorite is to do abs between sets of everything I do that day. I'll do 20 chins and rest my back while I perform 25 hanging leg raises in the Aboriginal hanging sling device. Then it's back for 15 chins, and so on. By the end of the training session my abs are beaten like a rug.

Do straight sets at one workout; then the next time do all supersets with one exercise after another. Even tiny changes will cause the body to respond favorably.

### **DY: Do you have any other favorite techniques?**

**LA:** My all-time-favorite technique is the extended set. It works great because it can be used at any condition level during any phase of a cycle. Let's say you're working leg curls. The first five reps are easy, reps six

through 10 hurt, and rep 11 is almost impossible. To avoid training to failure—unless it's your all-out peak week—you stop your set and pause for 20 to 60 seconds. Now continue the set. Three reps go very easily. If you're not in good shape, stop. The next three reps hurt, and if it's not peak week, stop there. If on the next two reps your legs are screaming, you stop. You can continue that way for some time—extending the set.

One of my most painful routines using that favorite technique involves shoulder presses. Do 15 reps, then lower the weight to your waist and switch to an undergrip and perform 10 curls with that same weight. Switch grips, get it up to your shoulders, and press it 13 times. Your arms will be burning now. Lower it again and do 10 more curls and then eight to 10 more shoulder presses. Your arms will be on fire! I go as long as I need to. If it's an easy week, I still do extended sets, I just don't push it as far. If it's a hard week, I blast away. I recommend this technique over, say, forced reps, which I have always found to be risky from an injury standpoint.

### **DY: You are an animal, Lee!**

**Editor's note:** To learn more about Lee Apperson's training, visit [www.leeapperson.com](http://www.leeapperson.com). **IM**