

# THE HOLY GRAIL

BODY TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

**REVEALED**



**EXCLUSIVE AUTHOR INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT**

[www.HolyGrailBodyTransformation.com](http://www.HolyGrailBodyTransformation.com)

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# The Holy Grail Revealed

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# *The Holy Grail Revealed*

## *Nick Nilsson Interviews Tom Venuto*

**NICK NILSSON:** I'd like to start by thanking Tom Venuto for coming on the call today. Tom Venuto is a legend in the bodybuilding and fat loss/body transformation department. He's been in the industry for years, competed in many different contests, written a lot books and has done so much excellent stuff. Tom, could you start by giving us a little bit of background in terms of your training and your bodybuilding—your education, experience, contests, that kind of thing.

**TOM VENUTO:** Sure, I'm a natural bodybuilder and I've been training since 1984. I started competing in 1989, while I was still in college. Since then, I've competed 28 times, in seven different federations, mostly the natural drug-tested federations, but even in the NPC open competitions, as a lifetime steroid-free bodybuilder. Most of the titles I won were up here in the Northeastern United States. I've won the Natural New Jersey, the Natural Pennsylvania, the Natural New York State, the Natural Mid-Atlantic States and the NPC Natural Eastern Classic Championships. I haven't won a national title or a pro card yet, but I'm still young. Plenty of time to compete again—I'm not retired yet!

I've also been working in the fitness industry my whole adult life. I've worn just about every hat there is, starting as a personal trainer and then a health club manager, which I did for years. When I was in college, I got my degree in exercise science and started as a trainer right out of school. So I've been doing it for a long time. Eventually, I took up an interest in research and writing. Today, I'm a full-time author, a freelance writer, an Internet publisher, I run a private fat loss forum and I do personal fat loss coaching. I've written over 400 articles and two books on fat loss: [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) is my e-book and *The Body Fat Solution* is published by Avery/Penguin in hardcover and trade paperback and it's available in all major bookstores.

**NICK NILSSON:** Excellent. You've definitely been around the block, man. Your [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) is a total classic program. If anybody doesn't have this e-book right now, really, you should get it. This program is basically everything you need to know about consistent long-term fat loss and doing it right—without gimmicks. It's excellent stuff, and I actually wanted to talk about this original book first before we move into your newest project, the [Holy Grail program](#). What's the basic premise of [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#)?

**TOM VENUTO:** [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) is a total fat loss program, so it does cover everything—the weight training, the cardio and even the motivation and the psychology behind fat loss. But if I were to summarize it, the main focus is fat-burning nutrition. What's most important for most people to nail down first is nutrition, and that's why I made nutrition the primary focus of [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#). If I were to define the focus further, I could describe the program in two words—bodybuilding nutrition. That doesn't necessarily mean it's only for bodybuilders. It just means it's the bodybuilding style of eating for burning fat and keeping the lean body mass. So the focus is body composition—burn the fat, keep the muscle—it's not a weight loss program where you don't care what kind of weight you lose or gain.

For guys like you and me and other nutrition- and fitness-savvy people, focusing on body composition not just body weight is obvious; but for most people out there, it's not so obvious. When you explain about body fat testing and the difference between fat and muscle and fat loss and weight loss, it's like a revelation to them. That's what [\*\*\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*\*\*](#) is designed to do.

The program is about how to eat in order to burn the fat, while keeping your muscle. It's based on the way bodybuilders do it. And today I also have to mention we have figure, fitness and bikini division competitors. Those divisions of competition weren't around when I started, but I consider them part of the same category—physique competition—which includes women. All these athletes eat more or less the same way. When you look at the way bodybuilders and fitness and figure girls look, it's simply amazing how ripped they get. And physique athletes have been doing pretty much the same thing for the last three decades, so this is a proven and tested system. You can go to any bodybuilding show or a figure show, and you can see for yourself the proof of how well it works.

**NICK NILSSON:** Yes. And that's exactly what this is. This is not some radical new theory that nobody has ever tried before. This is a time-tested system, and it's also a very strategic kind of program. It covers a lot of principles. If you have any questions about fat loss, this e-book is going to help you answer all of them, and it does a really thorough job of it. When you were first thinking about writing a book, what originally gave you the idea to do it?

**TOM VENUTO:** When I got out of college, I started to work as a full-time personal trainer, so I was more focused on the workout side of things. But I always wanted to give my clients some kind of education about nutrition, and I wanted it written so they could take it home and study it. That's because I learned a lesson about how important nutrition is for your clients to get results. As a personal trainer, you're only with your clients so many hours in the week—maybe an hour a day max. What really makes the most difference is what they do the other 23 hours of the day and the other days of the week when they're not with you.

It can be frustrating for a trainer if you've got a fantastic program designed that clients follow it to the letter when they're with you, but then they undo everything outside of the gym with poor nutrition. If my clients ate too much junk food when they went home after our workout, I knew all the hard work we did in the gym would be for nothing. So over the years, I kept writing down more information about nutrition and giving it to my clients. It started as worksheets and articles. That eventually expanded, so all my training clients essentially got a nutrition manual.

When I reached the point where my schedule was so booked and I couldn't take any more clients, I said to myself, "One way I could help more people is to take this manual and turn it into a real book—it's almost a book already—it just needs a few more chapters and a little editing." So I took my personal training client nutrition manual and turned it into a book. That's what became [\*\*\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*\*\*](#), way back in 2002. A year later I found out about these things called e-books, so in 2003, I turned it into an e-book that could be downloaded instantly. It's been on the e-book bestseller charts ever since then. It's been downloaded in 147 countries now. It's pretty amazing.

**NICK NILSSON:** Excellent. I remember getting into the e-book thing about the same time you did. It's amazing how many people you can reach and help online through e-books, as compared to just in a local setting like with personal training. In the [\*\*\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*\*\*](#) book, you mentioned there's a lot of nutrition. Is there also training information in there?

**TOM VENUTO:** There is, yes, but the bulk of the information in the e-book is about nutrition. In fact, it's become known as a fat loss "nutrition bible" of sorts. So if somebody is really interested in learning exactly how to eat, from the science and theory to meal planning by the numbers, with lists of food, meal plan templates and so on, they're going to be really happy with [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#). But I did want to make it a complete fat loss program and, as important as it is, nutrition alone doesn't cut it. I like to look at a complete fat loss program in terms of components. [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) has four components: nutrition, weight training, cardio training and what I call mental training, which is the psychology, motivation and behavior change side of it.

As one of those four components, I included a chapter on weight training where I provide training principles and sample training programs. The programs, to be consistent with the whole theme of the book, are done in the bodybuilding style. It's very effective training, although that style may not be for everybody. But the good part of [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) is that the program is modular—like plug and play. So you could use the nutrition component of [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#)—and if you wanted, you could plug in your own training program and you'd still have all four of the components you needed. The only thing you couldn't do is just drop out the weight training program. Dieting without any training is not the best way to approach fat loss.

There's also a cardio training program included with [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) and a completely separate chapter on how to integrate cardio into your weekly training schedule as part of a total fat loss program. I think it's really important to look at fat loss not just as diet, not just as training, but as components of a four-part system. When you put them all together, that's when you really start getting some incredible results.

**NICK NILSSON:** What you mentioned about the motivation and psychology side of it, I think is such a huge part, a part that many people miss. They've got everything else dialed in, but mentally, they're not ready to really dig in and do it.

**TOM VENUTO:** Exactly. I like to explain that the most important thing is not what program you follow, but what makes you follow your program. That's the psychology and the motivation side of things. Whichever training program you choose, whether it's my [\*Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle\*](#) training program, or if you want to plug in your own training program, you've got to be able to stick with it. That's why there's a motivation and psychology component in the program, and it's an important one. In fact, "How to Set Goals and Stay Motivated" is the first chapter of the book.

**NICK NILSSON:** I'm surprised that "Fat Burning Supplements" wasn't your first chapter, because I know you're such a huge fan of everything that's out there in that market.

**TOM VENUTO:** [LAUGHS] Ah, sarcasm there.

**NICK NILSSON:** I know—I'm dripping with sarcasm. I remember years ago reading an article you had written about how you responded when a supplement company actually approached you to endorse a product that you did not believe in.

**TOM VENUTO:** That's happened more than once. In fact, there is so much money in the supplement industry that a lot of people have told me, "Tom, if you would just start your own a supplement line, you'd be really wealthy, because you've already got a big following from your book. But right now

they buy your book once and they have everything they need. So why don't you sell them supplements?" My answer is because when it comes to fat burning supplements, there's really very little that works. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that 97–99% of the supplements that are promoted for fat loss don't work at all. At least in terms of there being no peer-reviewed science supporting it. The few that do work are nothing to get excited about.

For example, there's been quite a bit of research on green tea extract. If you get a large enough dosage of EGCG, the active ingredient in the tea, it's been proven to increase metabolism over 24 hours by about 80 calories a day. So is that really a big deal? Well, in theory, if that continues for about a month and a half, you'll lose an extra pound. That's about the best you can get with these natural over-the-counter fat burning supplements. But that's not the story that's displayed in the magazine before-and-after advertisements, is it? So in *[Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle](#)*, and in all my materials, I occasionally review some of the basic supplements that might be helpful, but you're not going to see any pitches for fat burners. I don't sell supplements. Never did and never will. There may be some that are marginally effective, but supplements are really just a tiny, tiny piece of the puzzle.

**NICK NILSSON:** That's been my experience, too, especially with the fat burning supplements. You need to have everything else in order with nutrition and training to even notice any difference.

**TOM VENUTO:** Exactly. It's like that last 1, or 2, or 3%. So you have to ask yourself, "Am I in a position where capturing that last percent or two in results makes a difference?" If you're a competitive athlete, then you must admit that every little bit counts. That's when you might want to start investing in proven, researched supplements, even if they are marginal in effectiveness, because at the upper level of competition, when you pay attention to details, that might give you a winning edge. But if you don't have the fundamentals in place yet—if you don't even have a solid training and nutrition program in place—you're completely barking up the wrong tree, to even look at supplements. That's not the place to start.

**NICK NILSSON:** I'm totally with you on that. I get questions on my site all the time like, "What supplement should I use?" The first thing I ask them is, "Well, what does your training and nutrition look like?" Generally speaking, I don't hear back from them because they know their training and nutrition are inconsistent—or non-existent—and they were just looking for a shortcut. Here's one question for you that I'm actually very interested to know: You've been very very successful in our field, so why you haven't been on *Oprah* yet?

**TOM VENUTO:** [LAUGHS] Good question. Does *Oprah Magazine* count? I have been in *Oprah's "O" Magazine*. One of my books, *The Body Fat Solution*, was reviewed in *Oprah Magazine* last year, and they gave me a favorable review. Polly Brewster, a reviewer for *O* said, "Tom Venuto is honest about what it takes to lose a large amount of body fat." I was happy because that's really what I want to be known for—that I'm not blowing smoke at anybody, pitching magic pills or quick fixes. What I teach is the opposite of quick fix: I teach a hard work ethic and a lifestyle approach. I want to be known for steering people away from quick fixes and telling people the truth about fat loss. I was very happy that they picked that particular way to endorse me. But if you know any of the producers over there and you want to hook me up...

**NICK NILSSON:** Hey, I'm in Chicago, man—I've got connections. Too bad they're not to the *Oprah* show. [Laughs]. If I did, I would have tried to get on there myself years ago!

Okay, let's go on to your new project, the [Holy Grail e-book](#). This is a really interesting topic that you're covering, which is how to burn fat and build muscle at the same time. We're going to talk about the definitions of that, too, but first of all let me ask, is it really possible to burn fat and build muscle at the exact same time in a program, meaning simultaneously?

**TOM VENUTO:** Well, you mentioned definitions, and I think whether it's possible depends on how we define "the same time." Do you mean the exact same time, like this very instant that we're all talking right now, or like 24 hours a day 7 days a week? Theoretically, that's possible, but it would be very unlikely and very difficult except under certain conditions. I don't believe that losing fat and gaining muscle at the same time, literally speaking, is how body composition change usually occurs. But if your definition is different, then the answer may be different.

For example, let's suppose you go on a six-week program and at the end of that entire period, you measure your body composition and compare it to the beginning. Your results show a significant drop in body fat and a small gain in muscle. Is that what you mean by gaining muscle and losing fat at "the same time?" If so, the answer is absolutely yes—it can be done. So over an extended period of time, without question, you can see an increase in muscle and a decrease in fat. Again, the big question is, did that happen literally at the same time?

Even though that may be possible, it's not likely, because at one moment in time, your body tends to be either in a catabolic or an anabolic state and the hormones that are released in each of those states are antagonistic to one another. The state of energy balance you have to be in for optimal muscle gains—positive energy balance—and the state of energy balance you need to be in for optimal fat loss—negative energy balance—are opposite to each other. The best explanation for how body composition improvement takes place over an extended time is that you're really alternating back and forth between those two states as opposed to the fat loss and the muscle gain occurring exactly at the same moment. Does that make sense?

**NICK NILSSON:** It makes total sense. That's been my experience as well. And when you try to do two things at the same time, sometimes you get nowhere in both of them—especially when they're diametrically opposed goals like that. You can look at the hormone insulin, for example. When the insulin level is high, it's great for muscle-building. But when the insulin level is high, it's terrible for fat burning. So basically, with your Holy Grail program, are you looking at this as alternating rapidly between two different styles?

**TOM VENUTO:** Exactly. [The Holy Grail](#) is a new program that focuses on one thing: answering this question of how to gain muscle and lose fat at the same time. I start off with the definition of "the same time" so we understand specifically that it means alternating between two different cycles rather than trying to gain and lose at the same time literally.

In one sense, I almost try to persuade people not to attempt losing and gaining at the same time, because they might end up getting in their own way. There's an old saying, "If you chase two rabbits, you catch neither."

Part of my overall message is to focus *primarily* on one goal. But if you wanted to gain muscle and lose fat at the same time and you define “same time” as an extended period, what you said is exactly correct. You want to set it up so you’re alternating between those periods of caloric surplus and caloric deficit. That’s basically the premise. It’s a cyclical approach, where your nutrition changes and your state of energy balance changes and your hormones change over time. The net result at the end of an extended period is that holy grail of all outcomes: concurrent gain in muscle with the loss of fat.

**NICK NILSSON:** That makes total sense. In the experience I’ve had with this kind of program—and I have used this style of program before—it’s very, very effective. I actually enjoy it, because it keeps you from getting bored from doing one thing. When you stuff yourself silly for too long, you start to lose your appetite. But go back to a diet phase, and you get your appetite back.

**TOM VENUTO:** Yes, that’s a very good point too. It becomes really draining if you’re constantly in a deficit. It wears you down. It can even be tough to stay in a surplus all the time. A lot of people figure, “If I switch to a muscle gain phase now, that’s going to be really easy—that’s going to be a fun change of pace, to be eating all the time.” And at first that’s true. But you know, even that gets to be difficult over time. If you ask any bodybuilder, especially someone who’s more like the ectomorph body type (naturally skinny, naturally lean), eating all the time for a long time is like a full time job. So it does give you a little bit of relief and a little bit of a break, by popping back and forth between the two—surplus and deficit—instead of doing one for a long time. That is, if it’s done in a really systematic fashion, not just randomly eating more or less

**NICK NILSSON:** Absolutely. And I’ve heard that with skinny people, you have to eat like a horse in order to gain muscle. For me, I have an ectomorphic tendency, so I find it easier to diet than I do to eat as much as I need to gain. I tend to have a huge appetite in bursts, but then I feel stuffed for the rest of the day, so any kind of cycling back and forth is welcome for me.

**TOM VENUTO:** That’s interesting. I’ve seen your pictures and I would never say you look anywhere remotely ectomorphic. But I guess that’s a testament to what you’re doing is working, though, isn’t it?

**NICK NILSSON:** It is. I have a small bone structure and when I first started, I was only around 140 pounds. I gained about 75 pounds in my first year of training. It took a lot of effort to fill out my frame. Once I discovered this kind of training and nutrition you’re talking about here with the [Holy Grail program](#), I found it much easier to do both—to lose fat and to build muscle. It’s a lot more fun, and it takes some of the pain out of it. That’s why I think this Holy Grail is really an important e-book.

If you’re looking at this program and trying to decide if you should get it or not, you should know that, especially coupled with Tom’s [Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle](#) book, you’re going to really learn a lot, not only about how to train and how to eat for losing fat, but also how you can build muscle at the same time.

In terms of the nutritional part of gaining muscle while also losing fat Tom, how specifically would you recommend people alternate their training between these two cycles?

**TOM VENUTO:** Well, this [Holy Grail program](#) is based on something that I could call nutritional periodization. Periodization just means cycling—dieting in cycles. That’s something you should do in your training too. Regardless of your goals, training in a strictly linear fashion is not the most effective way to do it. When you look at the research, you see that any kind of periodization is more effective than no periodization. Even if it’s as simple as alternating heavier and lighter workouts, that’s usually more effective than those programs that tell you to try, in a linear fashion, to always keep adding weight on the bar at every workout.

With training, I like to keep it simple. It’s the same as it would be if you were pursuing a traditional strength and muscle growth program. Instead of drastically changing the training, I prefer to cycle the nutrition and match the nutrition to the training. On training days, nutrition may be different around the workouts or even for the entire day. The workouts are periodized into strength and hypertrophy phases, but I’d do that anyway even if I wasn’t on the [Holy Grail program](#). I look at the [Holy Grail](#) as changing the nutrition to accommodate the training.

**NICK NILSSON:** Yes. That’s been my experience with the training, targeting it toward what you’re eating. It’s really effective stuff. I’ve actually had questions from people before, asking me about fat loss training and saying, “Why are people recommending the same thing for fat loss as for building muscle?” You know, like doing heavier weights and moderate reps most of the time instead of trying to go really high on the reps when trying to lose fat. It’s basically because you’re doing the same kind of training for fat loss as for muscle gains, but you’re adjusting the nutrition.

**TOM VENUTO:** Right. In fact, I’m glad you mentioned about the reps because a lot of people, when they go on a fat loss program—and I’m surprised so many still believe this—they think that switching to higher reps will make them leaner and burn more fat. But if they switch completely to high reps, because they think they’re properly cycling their training for fat loss, usually what happens is they end up losing lean body mass. That’s because the stimulus that builds muscle and helps keep it there the best is now gone.

What we do instead is to still use hypertrophy parameters. The reps, volume, load, rest intervals, they all may change a little, but I would never recommend doing something drastic with your training, like dropping all the heavy training and going exclusively to light weights and high reps, thinking it’s going to burn fat. The [Holy Grail program](#) is staying with muscle-building training and manipulating nutrition in cycles more so than the other way around.

**NICK NILSSON:** I found with some of the high-rep stuff, that it can be valuable in terms of kicking off lactic acid, which results in an increase in growth hormone. But that’s really the only time that I recommend doing high-rep training with any sort of dietary program—when your body is kind of primed for it. Like when you’re eating very low carbs, for instance, and your body has low insulin levels. When you’re doing the high-rep, growth hormone-based training, I found that can actually give you a really good kick. But you do have to build in heavier training to maintain the muscle tissue. That’s a huge thing a lot of people forget.

**TOM VENUTO:** I agree on including some high-rep training, especially for bodybuilders, for other reasons as well. When you change your rep ranges, that’s part of the intelligent periodization of training. But if you look at bodybuilding and you look back at champions like Tom Platz and what high-rep training did for his legs, you can see there is a place for it.

For those who don't know him, Platz was the bodybuilder, the Mr. Universe, who was known for having the largest, best developed legs in bodybuilding history. Part of his strategy was combining heavy weight with high reps. But what he didn't do was cut out the heavy work and go all with high reps just because he was cutting for a contest. That's counterproductive. He did higher rep training *and* heavy training.

So it's not that you should never do high reps, it's that you shouldn't stop doing the heavy work to go exclusively with high reps. Otherwise, you're going to lose some of that strength and size that you developed when you were doing the heavier loads.

**NICK NILSSON:** You do need to keep maintaining that heavier training in order to keep your body thinking, "I need to keep that muscle for some reason; otherwise, I'm just going to get rid of the muscle, because I'm only doing this light marathon training here." Yeah. That's a key point right there.

Next, what are the four factors that explain how some people lose fat and build muscle at a faster rate than others?

**TOM VENUTO:** I call those the X factors. They're the 4 factors that I mentioned in the [Holy Grail e-book](#). Basically, I'm honest in telling people up front that this is the most difficult goal to achieve—to gain muscle and lose fat at the same time—even when we define "the same time" as an extended period of weeks or months. But someone always comes back and says, "What about this advertisement that shows these before and after pictures? What about this bodybuilder? And what about that person's transformation?" There are always some exceptions or examples of people who made remarkable gains that makes it look not so difficult after all.

What I found is that there are four factors that almost always explain exceptional gains of muscle and losses of fat that happen concurrently. I think it's pretty important to know what these are, so you can establish realistic expectations.

The first X factor is called training age. Training age refers to not how old you are chronologically, but how many years you've been training. When you have a low training age, which means you're a beginner, you're going to get much better muscle gains than when you're advanced. So basically there's a growth curve; when you start, you get a remarkable spurt in muscle gains. The longer you've been training, the closer you're getting to your genetic ceiling, so the curve starts to flatten out and you start to see slower and slower gains.

I've been training since 1984 and competing since 1989. When you talk to an advanced bodybuilder like myself who's been training more than 20 years, they'll tell you, like I will, that they're happy just to gain a few pounds of muscle in a year. I'm talking about new, dry, solid muscle, as in stage weight on the day of a contest. If I gained a few pounds of stage weight each year, I'd be thrilled with that.

You see beginners getting remarkable gains in their first six months to a year. You mentioned that yourself—you gained an insane amount of weight your first year. Sometimes it sounds too good to be true, and people are tempted to write that off and say, "That can't be true... There's no way that happened... It's a fake testimonial," or something like that. But it's one of the factors that allows beginners to get remarkable gains in muscle.

That also applies to our [Holy Grail Body Transformation](#) concept. Those beginners are often the people you see get a substantial muscle gain, along with fat loss at the same time. So this is a factor you have to consider when you're looking at someone else's results and when you're setting goals for yourself.

**NICK NILSSON:** Absolutely. What's next?

**TOM VENUTO:** The next X factor is whether you've trained before and stopped. We call this muscle memory. Many people wonder if this muscle memory thing is just a bodybuilding myth, but if you researched it, you could find some science to support it. I also think that just about anybody who's been in the business for a while has seen real world examples of this. People who used to train regularly, laid off and then started training again. What you almost always see there is that it's easier to regain muscle you had and lost than it is to build muscle from scratch.

Coming back again to [The Holy Grail](#), if we say that gaining muscle and losing fat simultaneously is the hardest goal to achieve, but somebody comes along and makes it look easy, muscle memory could be another one of those conditions. I would ask, "Is this guy a newbie?" If he's not, was he trained before? If he stopped training, he now might be quickly regaining muscle that he used to have. So that's another X factor.

**NICK NILSSON:** Ok, great, and the next one?

**TOM VENUTO:** The third one is genetics. Anybody in bodybuilding will tell you this about genetics. When we're talking about genetics, we're talking about a lot of things. We're talking about body type. We mentioned earlier that an ectomorph is a naturally skinny person. There's a mesomorph, which is the opposite of that—the naturally muscular person—and also lean. Then you have the endomorph, who is more likely to store body fat easily. So you have these three different body types that we're predisposed to, and it's partially genetic. Body appearance can change with training, but there's a genetically dictated underlying tendency.

I would never say that genetics are an excuse as to why you can't reach your goals. But it would be naïve to think that genetics don't play a major role in how much muscle you can gain. There are people who are so genetically gifted, that when they go into a calorie surplus, they simply partition everything into muscle—every excess calorie it seems, goes right into muscle. They gain muscle like crazy, without fat. Those genetically gifted mesomorphs are usually the types who are also going to get remarkable gains in muscle and even lose fat at the same time. So genetics is another X factor.

Then the last X factor, unfortunately, is drugs. It's one that really isn't talked about that much, but anabolic steroids and various fat burning drugs are a major factor that can definitely increase the probability of losing fat and gaining muscle at the same time. But that's a road that I don't like to go down. You can build a fantastic physique without drugs. It's just that when you look at some other people, if they're taking drugs, you can't compare your rate of natural gains to what they're getting, if they're enhanced.

**NICK NILSSON:** Absolutely. I agree with all four of those. Now here's a question for you—something I've come across in my own use of this rapid switching between programs. What role do the various hormones play in this kind of switching? Like insulin, for instance.

**TOM VENUTO:** Insulin is one of several hormones involved. Insulin is a hormone that's very misunderstood, though. There are a lot of people, especially in the low carb community, who believe elevated insulin is a cause of body fat and look at it as a bad hormone. If you stay in a caloric deficit, then eating insulin-producing foods isn't going to make you fat. But insulin is a storage hormone, and high insulin levels could slow the release of fat from some of the stubborn fat cells, because of the way the adrenergic receptor system works.

So I wouldn't say insulin is a cause and effect factor in fat loss or an inherently bad hormone, but it does need to be managed both for health and fat loss. In a fat loss phase, one of the ways you can control insulin nutritionally is by moderating your carb intake and actually bringing up the healthy fats. There are a lot of reasons we might manipulate carb intake, and insulin management is one of them.

Another hormone that's involved is cortisol. That's one we really want to try to control because cortisol is a catabolic hormone, which means it breaks down muscle. So we want to be aware of all the things that can cause an unusually large increase cortisol. That includes factors from overtraining to stress, to lack of sleep. To optimize your gains in lean body mass and prevent loss of lean body mass, we want to make sure we're controlling cortisol.

Then we have the anabolic hormones, the ones that are going to have a positive effect—growth hormone and testosterone. The training parameters we choose can affect our hormonal response to training. Dr. William Kramer has done a lot of research on this. Basically what his team found is that if you select the right parameters in your training, which is approximately a 10-rep max, or somewhere in the 8-12 rep range; and you're not taking too long in between sets, but instead you're keeping a fairly brief rest interval; you're also choosing a heavy enough load; you're picking basic compound exercises, using a lot of rows and squats and presses; not over-depending on the isolation exercises, like leg extensions, you're going to get a maximum hormonal response to training. So we're manipulating hormones with training, we're manipulating hormones with nutrition, we're manipulating hormones with lifestyle strategies and putting them all together throughout the various cycles on this program for the maximum response.

Hormonal control is important on this kind of program, because we're looking at controlling nutrient partitioning, which is the impact that hormones have on where calories go after you eat them. This isn't just a calories-in, versus calories-out question. We can't dismiss calories and energy balance—you've got to have the deficit for the fat loss, and you've got to have the surplus for the muscle gain—but that's not all there is to it. That's because when you're in a deficit, you're going to pull energy from the body, but the question is, "Where is it going to come from?" Are you going to pull it out of your own lean tissue, because you're in a catabolic state, because your hormones are out of whack and the cortisol is high and you're stressed out and sleep-deprived? Or are you going to pull it from fat because you are hormonally primed to do that?

The reverse is also true. If you're in a calorie surplus, are you guaranteed to gain 100% muscle? Usually not. Usually you gain a little bit of muscle and a little bit of fat, but how much of each you gain depends on your hormonal state. [The Holy Grail program](#) works on manipulating those hormones in a way that when you're in a deficit, you're retaining the muscle and pulling from fat. And when you're in a surplus, you're partitioning those calories—that protein—into muscle, and not fat.

**NICK NILSSON:** And that’s what makes the name of this program ring so true. It is the “Holy Grail” to be able to do that, with this kind of nutritional periodization, like you’re talking about along with training to achieve that hormonal balance. It sort of “greases the wheels” for you in the hormones department, so you’re not gaining the excess fat in a surplus and you’re not losing muscle while you’re in the deficit.

In the [Holy Grail e-book](#), you also talk about three major types of nutritional periodization: macro, meso and micro. Could you give a brief rundown of each?

**TOM VENUTO:** I’ve simply borrowed the periodization terminology from training, but I’ve never seen anybody before this [Holy Grail program](#) actually use this terminology to describe cyclical nutrition. Now, I don’t claim to have invented cycle dieting, by any means. I did not invent the idea of post-workout and nutrient timing or cyclical dieting or any of these techniques. But I’ve put a name on it that makes sense: nutritional periodization. There are basically three cycles. There’s a macrocycle, a mesocycle and a microcycle, just like with training periodization. I’m simply going to apply this to nutrition.

Macro means big, so macrocycle is the big picture. That’s a multi-month primary goal. The traditional way to do this was having a bulking phase and a cutting phase, and they would usually last months at a time. So a macrocycle is a longer period of time with a primary goal. With the [Holy Grail program](#), the difference is that a macrocycle is not necessarily only gaining muscle and it’s not bulking up, as that implies gaining fat with the muscle. We’ve changed the possible goals to include a dual approach: a primary goal of muscle gain while losing some fat at the same time over a few months. That would be a Holy Grail macrocycle.

A mesocycle is zooming in, week by week, or within-week changes in nutrition. This is where the carb cycling, or the calorie cycling comes in—it’s done on a multi-day basis, within each week. For example, you might reduce calories for about three days and go into a deficit, but you’re selectively reducing the calories. Instead of cutting calories across the board, from proteins, carbs and fat, I’m having you cut the calories specifically in the form of carbs. Then for a day, or possibly even two or three days, you bring the carbs back in—sometimes a lot of them.

That’s the concept of carb cycling: you’re shifting into periods of surplus and deficit specifically by manipulating the carb intake. By doing that, the research tells us that we’re manipulating hormones of nutrient partitioning, energy balance and body weight regulation. One of the hormones we’re affecting is called leptin, which is an anti-starvation hormone. Leptin is primarily released by your fat cells and it tells your brain about the energy status in your body. It asks, “Is there a lot of fat stored in your fat cells?” And if there is, leptin is normal. And if you’re losing fat from your fat cells, leptin is lower, and that tells your brain, “Hey, we’re losing fat. We’re in a starvation state.”

Leptin is also affected by the amount of calories you’re taking in. So if you reduce your calories, the leptin drops. And if you reduce your carbs, leptin drops. That sends a signal to your brain, that, “Hey, we’re starving. We’re in a deficit. Warning. Danger.” There’s a whole cascade of events where this one hormone affects other hormones. Your metabolism regulating hormones go down while appetite hormones go up. We want to avoid that, and one way is by bringing the carbs back in. Research tells us that leptin is most sensitive to an increase in carbs. By spiking calories periodically with carb cycling, this brings leptin back to normal and helps us to keep burning fat at the normal rate.

Another reason we cycle is that sustaining long periods of deficit or surplus is hard to do. Even a full week on really low carbs and low calories can get tough if you're training intensely. You start to feel drained, so cycling into higher carbs and calories temporarily gives you that psychological break. These cycles or within-week changes in carbs and calories are called the mesocycles.

Finally, we have the microcycle. That's within-day nutrient timing. That's like your post-workout or pre-workout nutrition. Basically, we're looking at nutrient intake on an hour by hour basis.

So all together we've got the big picture with the multi-month cycles, then we've got the daily and weekly changes, which are the mesocycles, and we have the within-each-day changes, which are the microcycles.

**NICK NILSSON:** This kind of approach really gives you the ability to wrap your mind around everything that you're doing. You see the big picture, and then whittling things down lets you plan things out a lot better.

Another thing I wanted to ask you about was pre-workout nutrition. I actually get this question all the time. People ask me, "For fat loss, should I eat something about an hour before training?" I want to get your take on that.

**TOM VENUTO:** I'm a big fan of loading calories and carbs around the workout. Some people call it a bracketing technique. You want to make sure before you work out, that you're adequately fueled for the workout. Some of that has to do with what's happened over the last day or so. Your glycogen could have built up previously, but we have to look at the short-term, micro level too because fueling immediately before your workout is also important. That's why I believe in taking a substantial meal before your workout. That might be an hour before you workout, or just enough time to digest it so you don't get an upset stomach. Then you eat another substantial meal after training.

This method, the large post-workout meal, is very well accepted, and the pre- and post-workout nutrition is part of this nutrient timing system. What you want to do is give your body more calories when you need them the most and fewer calories when your body doesn't need them as much. This whole concept of the microcycle and the within-day energy balance is basically saying that we're used to looking at energy balance in 24-hour periods, but that's not really how the body works, that's just a convenient unit of time we use so we can wrap our head around these calorie and macronutrient numbers and for daily menu planning.

At the end of the day, a shopkeeper closes up his register and can figure out whether he made money—did he make a profit or have a loss? Is he operating at a surplus or at a deficit? Our body doesn't really work that way. It's not like at midnight, your body tallies up whether you were in a deficit for the day and right then at midnight, your body either withdraws fat or gains muscle. It doesn't happen like that. Energy balance is a continuous process. It's literally an hour by hour process.

That's what this [Holy Grail Body Transformation](#) is all about. It's looking at what's going on day by day, hour by hour and providing fuel accordingly. With this approach, you can get better results on both sides—the muscle gain and the fat loss. This is one of the ways you can achieve that Holy Grail goal, by looking at your energy needs on the micro level too, and not just 24 hours at a time.

**NICK NILSSON:** Honestly, I'm kind of a huge fan of this technique. Basically, you eat carbs when you're earning your carbs or about to earn your carbs.

**TOM VENUTO:** Exactly. That's a good way of putting it—you "earn" the extra carb calories. I often say, "You haven't earned it until you've burned it," which makes you think about saving the biggest high carb meal until after the intense workout.

**NICK NILSSON:** Absolutely. The concept is that your body is going to use the energy and nutrients the best if you give them to your body WHEN it's most able to use them. When your body is not going to be able to use them, you taper things down a bit. On a bulk-up phase, a lot of people do 5–6 meals a day. For me, I can't stick with that. I used to be able to—in fact, when I was in college, I would eat up to eight meals a day. These days, I work at home and I do have the time to eat multiple meals, but I end up eating only three meals a day. I have a good-sized breakfast, a light lunch before training, and then I take a huge meal after training. For me, that works like a charm, even on fewer meals a day.

**TOM VENUTO:** I think it's really important to mention, too, that if you go with the traditional 3 meals a day, instead of the bodybuilding method of 5–6 meals a day, then this nutritional periodization concept is even more important—much more important. Because if you're eating something every few hours, the timing is not quite as important. But with the lower meal frequency, making sure that you get adequate post-workout nutrition and timing your nutrients according to activities is crucial and that could mean a really big post-workout meal.

**NICK NILSSON:** That approach—eating a lot more calories after the workout when your body can use them the most—also works well for people who have a hard time eating a lot of food to gain weight. When you couple it with this Holy Grail style of switching up calorie and carb intake, it's really effective stuff. Now, on to cardio.

I get a lot of questions about this, especially in terms of fat loss, obviously. What do you find to be the best type and frequency of cardio?

**TOM VENUTO:** The answer really is, it depends. It depends on your goal, whether your goal is fat loss or muscle gain. Whether your primary goal is strength. If somebody is a strength athlete, they're probably not going to be doing all that much cardio. If someone's goal is maximum fat loss in the shortest period of time, they're going to be doing a lot more cardio. If they're an ectomorph, they're probably doing less cardio. If they're endomorphs, they're probably doing more.

Before I wrote the [Holy Grail e-book](#), I took up a little pet project to look at all of the research on concurrent strength and endurance training. This has been researched in-depth. It's one of those questions exercise physiologists are really curious about: "If you do cardio, does it interfere with your strength? Does it interfere with your muscle gains? If so, and especially if you want to lose fat also, how do we find the right balance of cardio and strength? If we're going after the Holy Grail, which includes gaining muscle, it's a very pertinent question, because we can't afford to err on the side of too much cardio if there's an interference effect.

In the research, I found a pretty definitive answer about how much cardio you can do before there are interference effects. The first thing you need to know is that doing cardio does not necessarily interfere with strength or muscle gains. In fact, most of the research says that a moderate amount of

cardio will actually increase your muscle gains. That surprises a lot of people, but the science is there to prove it.

Cardio can increase nutrient clearance from the blood, enhance nutrient uptake into the cells, increase capillary density, which is going to deliver more of those hormones and oxygen and nutrients into the cells and help remove some of the waste products from the working muscle tissue. When you're more cardio fit, in general, you recover better too.

Some of the low intensity types of cardio can actually be considered active recovery. I mentioned earlier about Tom Platz and his famous high-rep squats. If anybody has ever done 20-rep squats, you know that you're gasping for air if you're not in good cardio shape. Even just 10- and 12-rep sets on compound exercises can be exhausting. If you have good cardio, you're going to get through it better. So it's important to say first that cardio can actually help muscle growth and has many benefits, because there is a lot of cardio bashing lately. I'm sure you've heard it. I know I've heard it, but most of the criticism is not true; cardio simply needs to be approached intelligently.

Here's what the research found about interference effects. Suppose you're doing weight training about three or four times a week. Weight training is high intensity training. If you also do cardio more than about three days per week, and the cardio is also fairly intense, then whatever cardio you do beyond that starts to interfere a little bit with your strength. That, in turn, may interfere with muscle gains or hypertrophy. And then if you go too far, to an extreme with cardio, it's possible it could cause muscle loss.

If the [Holy Grail](#) is your goal—if you want to actually gain muscle and lose fat at the same time—it's important to be a little bit conservative on cardio. Three days a week. Depending on the intensity, it could be anywhere from only 20 minutes up to as much as 50 minutes. It really depends. If you want to hold on to strength and muscle or even gain some as we do on this program, we recommend no more than three days of intense or moderate cardio on top of the weight training. When your goal is maximum fat loss, then you could do much more cardio. You could go to four, five, or six days a week. And if you want to be really careful about maintaining your lean body mass, the additional cardio you do beyond three days per week would best be done as light, low intensity cardio.

That's a surprise to a lot of people too, because they keep hearing that the only way you should do cardio is with high intensity. It's true the high intensity cardio is far more efficient. Your conundrum is that if you need to accelerate fat loss and you're already doing three days a week of cardio, and you don't want to cut more calories, your only other option is more cardio. Adding more intense cardio could be counterproductive, but adding low intensity cardio would help with increasing fat loss without risking overtraining. That could mean walking or light treadmill or low intensity cycling or some kind of activity that's not going to tap into your recovery ability or put any kind of stress on your central nervous system.

**NICK NILSSON:** I've seen that with the cardio bashing, especially with the low intensity cardio bashing. In my opinion, there's nothing wrong with doing some low intensity cardio every now and again. It is more efficient to do it with a high intensity—like the interval training approach—but if you enjoy doing low intensity cardio training, why not?

**TOM VENUTO:** Sure. It's a matter of personal choice and preference too. We're all pressed for time, and time is valuable, but some people have fewer time limitations than others. For example, I'm self-employed, so I control my own schedule. I can do any amount of training that I want to. And sometimes I just don't want to do all-out sprint cardio. Sometimes I want to pop in a DVD and a commercial-free TV show might run 40 or 50 minutes, which is a perfect amount of time for a cardio workout of low or moderate intensity. I don't watch a lot of TV but that's one time I do and it actually makes the time go by pretty quick. It doesn't always have to be high intensity cardio. In fact, it shouldn't.

**NICK NILSSON:** Absolutely. The high intensity stuff, as good as it is, does eat into your recovery. Full sprints up a hill—that's really going to eat into your recovery, and especially if you're more of an ectomorphic type. You have to keep an eye on that and sometimes stick to the lower intensity stuff, so you don't compromise recovery.

**TOM VENUTO:** I see a lot of dichotomous thinking about cardio even among really good fitness professionals. Maybe they created their program and it was based only on high intensity interval training, so they refuse to prescribe any other type of cardio. I think the person who understands how and when to use the intense cardio, and how and when to use lower intensity forms of cardio is a lot better off than the person who believes all low intensity cardio is a waste of time. The more choices you have, the more flexibility you'll have and the more power you have to get results.

**NICK NILSSON:** The analogy I like to use is that it's a tool in your toolbox. A screwdriver is neither good nor bad. You just use it when it's appropriate. I think a lot of people miss that, especially trainers who get invested in their own style of training and don't feel they can recommend any other style without compromising themselves. But that's not the case. Having an open mind doesn't mean you have an empty head.

The next question I have for you is, What are a few of the lifestyle factors that come into play when you want to maximize your results with this [Holy Grail](#) style of training?

**TOM VENUTO:** That's a good question because we talked about nutrition and training, but really, that's only several hours of your week. Lifestyle is everything else that happens in the rest of your week. We're talking about sleep. We're talking about your mental and emotional outlook and the amount of stress in your life. We're talking about the kind of behaviors and habits you engage in every day. Do you abuse stimulants and drink coffee all day long? What are your alcohol drinking habits? Lifestyle factors are everything that goes on outside the gym that might affect your results inside the gym.

In the [Holy Grail e-book](#), the fourth section is about these "Lifestyle Factors." If we really want to go after the Holy Grail of all goals—gaining muscle and losing fat—we've got to make sure we're in good shape hormonally. Two of the biggest lifestyle factors that affect hormones more than most people realize are sleep and stress. We read about sleep all the time. But just in the last few years, researchers have really dived into this and found out exactly what's going on when you're sleep-deprived.

Obviously, you're not going to recover as well. Obviously, you're going to be tired, so it may decrease your workout performance. But there's more than that. In some of the recent research, we

found that sleep deprivation, independent of caloric intake, will reduce leptin, and that's not good. It can increase ghrelin, a stomach hormone that increases hunger. That's not good. So we've got a hormonal change from sleep deprivation, where metabolism decreases and appetite increases. That's a double whammy. When you start affecting hormones like leptin, which are an umbrella hormone, it triggers a cascade affect and one hormone affects the next one down the line, like thyroid.

I must confess that years ago, I was one of the "tough guys" and I would sleep only 5–6 hours a night. I was one of the guys who always said things like, "Plenty of time to sleep when you're dead." I rationalized, "I'm a businessman and a bodybuilder and I'm just too busy to sleep my life away." I actually got by okay with 5, 5-1/2 hours of sleep. But now I'm very convinced, after seeing the amount of research that's been coming out, that I was compromising my results. Even though I was competing in bodybuilding and doing well, I would have done a lot better if I would have taken sleep more seriously and gotten eight hours, or least seven hours of good quality sleep. If you're struggling to get any results, check your sleep first. Don't underestimate the affect that this can have.

The other one is stress, and stress affects a lot of the same hormones. If you have constant stress and there's no relief, and you have no coping mechanisms to handle stress, it's not simply bad for you. It can literally kill you. But if it doesn't kill you, it can make you fat. Because when you experience a stress response, cortisol goes up. The high cortisol and the high stress have been correlated to more visceral fat storage, insulin resistance, high insulin levels, impairment in your glucose tolerance. Even your blood lipids get messed up. The risk of heart disease goes up. It's not a good situation.

Stress and sleep get so easily written off, even by athletes. I did it myself. It's like we're "tough guys" and we thumb our noses at it. And yet, the effect this has on our hormones is more than we realize. Out of all of the lifestyle factors, you've really got to take a close look at sleep and stress.

When you look at your stress level, you do need to realize stress is a normal part of life. We're not trying to avoid stress. We're trying to develop coping mechanisms and avoid continuous stress. When we feel stressed, that's our signal to relax, and then we must have ways to relax or escape from stress. Whatever it is for you, there's a long list of ways to cope with stress. We've got to have them and we've got to take it more seriously.

**NICK NILSSON:** That's like a whole new saying, right there: "Whatever doesn't kill you, only makes you fatter." It could be the title of a book! Here's a final question, Tom, before we wrap up. This actually goes back to supplements. I'm curious if you have any recommended supplements that have been proven and would work well with this kind of approach?

**TOM VENUTO:** Obviously creatine, because there's so much research on it. Look at how many studies there are on creatine—at least 400 last time I checked, maybe a lot more. Creatine helps strength and lean body weight gains; there's no question about that, although it may not work equally for everybody. There have been some studies showing some people are responders and some are non-responders. But I think it's worth taking. I get asked about creatine all the time, and it's strange, but a lot of people are leery of taking it for a variety of reasons. They seem worried about side effects—but it's totally safe. I'd say absolutely use it. It's the one on top of the list.

For other supplements, consider the basic stuff like a multivitamin. There's an interesting irony about multivitamin supplements. The people who need them the least, which is the health food fanatics, are

most likely to take them, and the people who need them the most, the junk food junkies, are least likely to take them. I've seen this debated, as to whether you really need a multivitamin/mineral, if you're eating a lot of fruits and vegetables and maybe you don't. But nobody has a perfect diet 100% of the time, and they're fairly inexpensive. So why not play it safe and view it as nutritional insurance?

**NICK NILSSON:** Do you know what else I found? When people say, "You're just going to pee it all out—all the extra vitamins," I'd say, "I'd rather spend a few bucks on some nutritional insurance than have to get a prescription later because you had a deficiency that could have been corrected nutritionally." Compared to expensive drugs that have all these side effects, why not just take a little multivitamin? It's not going to kill you. It's going to help you.

**TOM VENUTO:** Here's another one worth taking. Out of all the essential nutrients that people are light in or even deficient in, Omega-3 fatty acids are pretty high on the list. Your standard American diet—the Western diet—also has a skewed ratio of Omega-6 and Omega-3 which is also a problem. I used to widely recommend flax oil and I still think it's a good product. But after doing a lot of research on fish oil, it's almost a no-brainer supplement to take, unless you're already eating fatty fish several times a week, or every day. Then you don't need it. If you're not eating fatty fish or taking in a lot of food-rich sources of Omega-3, that's definitely worth putting on your supplement list too.

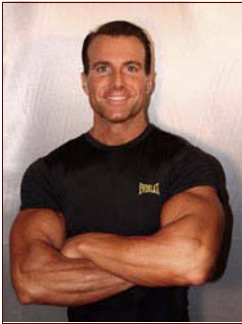
Probably the only other thing I recommend is protein powder or protein-based meal replacement products, which can also be helpful. I would probably put post-workout nutrition in that category of meal replacements also. If you want to take your post-workout nutrition in the form of a shake, that can be beneficial. I don't consider it mandatory, but a lot of people find it helpful for convenience.

**NICK NILSSON:** Very true. I like to take the whey protein right after a workout because it digests more quickly than a lot of food products. That's one big advantage you have right there. It's more convenient too. If you're on a low carb diet, it can taste pretty good too.

That's all the questions I have for you today, Tom. I'd like to thank you again for doing this and taking an hour out of your night to talk about this [Holy Grail program](#) and the [Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle](#) program. This is excellent stuff, and it's really backed by a lot of research, which is definitely what Tom is all about—he is always proving everything that he's claiming. This isn't stuff just pulled out of the blue. This is research-backed information. I use this kind of training in my own programs as well and I find it tremendously effective.

So Tom, I'd like to thank you, again, for coming on. •

## ***About Tom Venuto***



Tom Venuto is a natural bodybuilder, nutrition researcher and freelance writer. Tom holds a bachelor of science degree in Adult health/fitness (exercise science) and is a long time member of the American College of Sports Medicine and the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

Tom has been training since 1983 and has competed 28 times since 1989 as a lifetime natural (steroid-free) bodybuilder. His titles include the Mr. Natural New Jersey, Natural Pennsylvania, Natural New York State, Natural Mid Atlantic States and Natural Eastern Classic Championships. He was also runner up in both the Natural USA and Natural North America Championships.

Venuto is the author of numerous books including the #1 selling e-book [\*Burn The Fat, Feed The Muscle\*](#) (e-book), the National and #1 Amazon bestseller, *The Body Fat Solution* (Avery/Penguin, hardcover). His latest, [\*The Holy Grail Body Transformation System\*](#) (e-book), is the only science-based guide on the market that teaches you how to gain muscle and lose fat at the same time—the “Holy Grail” of fitness goals.

Tom is a regular guest on podcasts and radio shows including Martha Stewart healthy living (Sirius XM satellite radio), ESPN-1250, WCBS-AM and Blog talk radio.

Tom’s articles have been featured on *hundreds* of websites worldwide and he has been featured in *IRONMAN*, *Australian IRONMAN*, *Natural Bodybuilding*, *Muscular Development*, *Men’s Fitness*, *Men’s Exercise*, *First For Women*, *Oprah Magazine*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*.

Tom is also the founder and CEO of the premier fat loss support community, [\*Burn The Fat Inner Circle\*](#). He lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, near New York City.

You can visit Tom online at:

**The Holy Grail Body Transformation System**  
<http://www.HolyGrailBodyTransformation.com>

**Burn the Fat, Feed the Muscle**  
<http://www.burnthefat.com>

**Burn the Fat Inner Circle**  
<http://www.BurnTheFatInnerCircle.com>

## ***About Nick Nilsson***



Nick Nilsson is known in the fitness world as the “Mad Scientist of Exercise,” and for good reason. For more than 20 years, Nick has been creating new exercises and training techniques and putting together some of the most innovative muscle-building and fat-loss programs in the industry.

To create such unique programs and “invent” new exercises, Nick puts to work his years of experience and his degree in physical education, covering advanced biomechanics, kinesiology, anatomy and physiology. Nick’s clients who regularly use his exercises and workouts immediately see and feel exactly how this combination of science, practical knowledge, thinking outside the box—and a little bit of “insanity”—come together to maximize.

Nick began his training career in high school as a 145-pound cross-country runner (and ectomorph!), looking to build muscle and get bigger. Today, putting to work all the unique techniques and exercises he has come up with, Nick weighs in at a rock-solid 200 pounds with single-digit bodyfat.

These days, he uses his experience as a former skinny guy to help others build muscle, lose fat or both. He has helped literally thousands of people accomplish their goals and achieve results above and beyond the reach of more traditional programs.

In addition to being published in a variety of magazines (like *Muscle*, *Muscle & Fitness*, *Reps*) and thousands of training websites across the Internet, Nick is also the author of numerous books, including:

### **Muscle Explosion! 28 Days To Maximum Mass**

<http://www.fitstep.com/muscle-explosion/explosive-muscle-building.htm>

### **Metabolic Surge—Rapid Fat Loss**

<http://www.fitstep.com/metabolic-surge/metabolic-surge-rapid-fat-loss.htm>

### **The Best Exercises You’ve Never Heard Of**

<http://www.fitstep.com/Bestexercises/bestexercises.htm>

### **Gluteus to the Maximus—Build a Bigger Butt NOW!**

<http://www.fitstep.com/bigger-butt/how-to-build-a-bigger-butt.htm>

### **The Best Abdominal Exercises You’ve Never Heard Of**

<http://www.fitstep.com/best-ab-exercises/best-ab-exercises.htm>

### **Mad Scientist Muscle**

<http://www.fitstep.com/mad-scientist/mad-scientist-muscle.htm>

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- The power of hormones to dramatically shift fat to muscle... Discover what steps you must take to achieve hormonal control for maximum muscle growth and fat loss... This is **MUST-HAVE** information because, if your hormones are out of whack, the game is over.
- The 5 “X2 Factors” that influence your ability to gain muscle and lose fat at the same time... They all depend on your current body composition (lean or fat) and dieting status (dieted down or not dieted down)... Depending on which category you’re in, it can totally change your approach.
- How to choose the right body transformation goal: Should you focus on burning fat, gaining muscle or doing both at the same time? If you pursue the wrong goal, you’ll be wasting time and you might even get fatter.
- How to steal the proven system of training periodization from world class athletes and apply it to your muscle-building and fat-burning goals... Plus, how nutritional periodization might be the single biggest breakthrough for building muscle and burning fat at the same time.
- 5 post-workout nutrition strategies to improve muscle growth and optimize recovery from your workouts... Forget fancy post-workout nutrition calculations or expensive supplements—these tips are so easy to apply, you’ll kick yourself for ever thinking this was complicated.
- Carb tapering and carb targeting strategies explained for the new decade... These are the latest updates to the time-tested techniques used by some of the best bodybuilders, fitness models and figure competitors in the world.
- Cycle dieting techniques under the microscope... Find out which methods work and which ones will actually make you fatter.
- The 5-point weight training optimization checklist: Compare your workout to these **MUST-HAVE** conditions for gaining muscle while stripping fat... See what’s missing, plug the holes, and watch your results explode!



- 4 reasons why cardio can help you gain more muscle, if you do it right... and why you will get weaker and smaller if you do it wrong.
- The 8-point cardio power plan: Follow these 8 guidelines and you can't go wrong with your cardio program.

You can get more details and download the *Holy Grail Body Transformation System* instantly from the official Holy Grail website at:

[www.HolyGrailBodyTransformation.com](http://www.HolyGrailBodyTransformation.com)

