MANDY ELLIS FITNESS

FREE STARTER GUIDE

THE WOMEN OVER 35 FAT-LOSS STARTER GUIDE

A realistic roadmap for nutrition, strength, movement, consistency, and lasting progress.



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WELCOME | THIS IS NOT ANOTHER EXTREME PLAN

Fat loss does not require starting over, cutting out every food you enjoy, or living in the gym.

If you are over 35 and feel like your body has changed, you are not imagining it. Your schedule may be fuller, recovery may feel different, sleep may be less predictable, and hormonal changes can affect hunger, energy, water retention, and where fat is stored. Those factors matter - but they do not make progress impossible.

The goal of this guide is to help you stop guessing. You will build a simple foundation that supports fat loss while protecting your energy, muscle, and real life.

THE BIG IDEA

Fat loss happens when your average calorie intake is lower than your average calorie needs over time. The plan succeeds when that deficit is moderate enough to repeat consistently. Protein, strength training, movement, sleep, and stress management make the process easier and help preserve the results.

What you will focus on

- A manageable calorie deficit - not the lowest calories you can tolerate.
- Enough protein to support muscle, fullness, and recovery.
- Strength training to give your body a reason to keep muscle.
- Daily movement that fits your current ability and schedule.
- Weekly trends instead of emotional reactions to one weigh-in.
- A flexible plan you can continue during weekends, travel, and busy seasons.

You do not need perfect hormones, perfect motivation, or a perfect week. You need a clear starting point, honest feedback, and enough repetition to learn what works for your body.

01 | CREATE THE RIGHT CALORIE TARGET

Start with data, then adjust from your real-world trend.

Calories are the energy your body uses to stay alive, move, train, digest food, and recover. To lose body fat, you need a calorie deficit. But an aggressive deficit often creates fatigue, cravings, poor workouts, and a weekend rebound.

A practical starting estimate

STEP 1 - ESTIMATE MAINTENANCE

Multiply your current body weight in pounds by 13-15. Use 13 if you are mostly sedentary, 14 if you are moderately active, and 15 if you train and move regularly.

Example: 170 lb x 14 = approximately 2,380 calories per day for estimated maintenance.

STEP 2 - CREATE A MODERATE DEFICIT

Subtract about 250-400 calories from estimated maintenance. In the example above, a reasonable starting target might be about 1,980-2,130 calories. Avoid automatically jumping to 1,200 calories.

Treat the estimate as a starting hypothesis, not a verdict. Track your intake and body-weight trend consistently for 2-3 weeks. If the trend is slowly decreasing and you feel reasonably good, stay the course. If it is flat, first check consistency, portions, weekends, and movement before lowering calories.

A reasonable rate of progress

- Often about 0.25%-0.75% of body weight per week.
- Faster is not always better; larger bodies may initially lose faster.
- If strength, sleep, mood, or hunger deteriorate sharply, the deficit may be too aggressive.
- Medical conditions, medications, pregnancy, breastfeeding, or an eating-disorder history require individualized guidance.

REMEMBER

You cannot judge a calorie target from three days. Your weight can rise while you are losing fat because of sodium, carbohydrates, digestion, inflammation, stress, your menstrual cycle, or a hard workout.

02 | MAKE PROTEIN YOUR ANCHOR

Protein is the most useful place to begin when meals feel inconsistent.

Protein supports muscle repair, helps you stay full, and makes it easier to preserve lean mass during fat loss. It does not need to be perfect at every meal; aim for a consistent daily average.

Choose a starting method

METHOD	HOW TO USE IT
Goal-body-weight method	Multiply a realistic goal weight in pounds by 0.7-1.0. A 150 lb goal may equal about 105-150 g/day.
Per-meal method	Aim for roughly 25-40 g at each main meal, then use a snack if needed.
Simple first step	If intake is currently low, add 20-30 g to your present average rather than forcing a huge overnight jump.

Easy protein building blocks

- Chicken, turkey, lean beef, pork tenderloin, fish, shrimp, tuna, or eggs.
- Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, or lactose-free options if tolerated.
- Tofu, tempeh, edamame, lentils, or a blended plant protein.
- Protein powder for convenience - not because whole food is inadequate.
- Pre-cooked proteins, tuna packets, deli turkey, or rotisserie chicken for rushed days.

BUILD THE DAY BACKWARD

Choose your dinner protein first, plan lunch next, then breakfast. Divide the remaining grams among snacks. This is usually easier than reaching dinner with 70 grams left.

Protein is not a magic fat burner, and more is not endlessly better. It is one part of a balanced intake that also includes carbohydrates, fats, fiber, and micronutrients.

03 | BUILD MEALS THAT ACTUALLY SATISFY

You can eat for fat loss without preparing separate 'diet food.'

Use this structure when you do not want to weigh or track every ingredient. Portions can be adjusted based on your body size, appetite, activity, and progress.

The balanced plate

1/2 PLATE	1/4 PLATE	1/4 PLATE
Colorful vegetables or fruit Fiber + volume	Lean protein Fullness + muscle support	Carbohydrate Energy + training support

Add a measured source of fat when the meal does not already contain one: olive oil, avocado, nuts, seeds, cheese, dressing, or nut butter. These foods are nutritious, but easy to underestimate.

Five mix-and-match meal ideas

- Eggs or egg whites + oatmeal + berries + nut butter.
- Chicken bowl with rice, vegetables, salsa, and avocado.
- Turkey wrap with a side salad and fruit.
- Salmon, potatoes, and roasted vegetables.
- Greek yogurt or plant yogurt bowl with protein powder, fruit, and cereal or granola.

THE 80/20 APPROACH

Let most choices support your goals while leaving room for food you enjoy. Flexibility helps prevent the 'I blew it, so I will restart Monday' cycle. One higher-calorie meal is information - not failure.

If you track food, measure calorie-dense extras for a week: cooking oil, dressings, creamers, bites while cooking, alcohol, nuts, and restaurant sauces. Awareness often fixes the gap without a major calorie cut.

04 | STRENGTH TRAIN TO PROTECT YOUR SHAPE

Fat loss makes you smaller. Strength training helps determine what you keep.



Muscle supports strength, function, bone health, insulin sensitivity, and the firmer look many women want. You do not need six gym days. Two to four focused sessions can work very well.

A strong weekly foundation

- Train each major muscle group about twice weekly when possible.
- Use a weight or variation that makes the last few repetitions challenging with good form.
- Most working sets can fall in the 6-15 rep range.
- Rest enough to perform the next set well - often 1-3 minutes.
- Keep a record so you can progress intentionally.

Progressive overload means gradually asking your body to do more. That may be one additional repetition, slightly more weight, better technique, a larger range of motion, or another set. It does not mean maxing out every session.

SIMPLE 3-DAY EXAMPLE

Day 1: squat or leg press, Romanian deadlift, chest press, row, core
Day 2: hip thrust, split squat, pulldown, shoulder press, carry
Day 3: deadlift variation, step-up, incline press, cable row, glute isolation

Begin with 2-3 working sets per exercise. Adjust movements for injuries and your current ability.

Sharp pain, dizziness, chest pain, or unusual shortness of breath is not a cue to push harder. Stop and seek appropriate medical guidance.

05 | USE MOVEMENT WITHOUT PUNISHMENT

Your workouts matter, but what you do during the rest of the day matters too.

Daily movement - walking, errands, chores, standing, and playing with your kids - can change substantially when calories drop. Many people unconsciously move less when dieting, which is one reason progress can slow.

Find your baseline first

- Track normal steps for 7 days without trying to impress yourself.
- Calculate the average.
- If appropriate, add roughly 1,000-2,000 steps per day or two short walks.
- Choose a target you can still hit on a busy day.
- Increase gradually if your joints, recovery, schedule, and medical status allow.

> **NO STEP TRACKER?**
>
> Use time instead: start with 10 minutes after one or two meals, a 20-30 minute walk, or several 5-minute movement breaks. Consistency matters more than whether a device gives you credit.

What about cardio?

Cardio improves heart health and can increase energy expenditure, but it should not be used to erase food. Begin with 2-3 manageable sessions per week if desired. Walking, cycling, swimming, incline walking, and short intervals can all work. Choose an option you can recover from.

Minimum-day movement plan

- Take a 5-10 minute walk after a meal.
- Stand or move for 2-3 minutes each hour.
- Park farther away or take an extra lap through the store.
- Do mobility or body-weight work while watching television.
- When injured, follow your clinician's restrictions and focus on permitted movement rather than chasing a number.

The best movement target is not the highest one you can reach once. It is the one you can repeat without creating pain, exhaustion, or resentment.

06 | READ THE SCALE CORRECTLY

A scale measures total mass, not body fat.

Body weight includes water, food in your digestive system, glycogen, muscle, organs, bone, and fat. A 2-4 lb overnight increase is almost never 2-4 lb of body fat.

Common causes of temporary increases

- More carbohydrates: glycogen storage brings additional water.
- Higher sodium or a restaurant meal.
- Menstrual-cycle or perimenopause-related fluid changes.
- Constipation or simply more food volume.
- A hard strength workout and the inflammation involved in recovery.
- Poor sleep, travel, alcohol, stress, or a change in medication.

USE A 7-DAY AVERAGE

If daily weighing feels emotionally neutral, weigh under similar conditions: morning, after using the bathroom, before food or drink. Add seven weights and divide by seven. Compare weekly averages across 3-4 weeks, not Monday to Tuesday.

Track more than body weight

- Waist, hip, and other measurements every 2-4 weeks.
- Progress photos in similar lighting, clothing, and position.
- Strength, repetitions, energy, hunger, sleep, and recovery.
- How clothing fits.
- Your completion of planned behaviors.

If weighing increases anxiety or triggers disordered behavior, use fewer weigh-ins or rely on other measures with professional support. Data should guide you, not control you.

07 | ACCOUNT FOR LIFE AFTER 35

Hormones can influence the process without canceling the fundamentals.

Perimenopause, menopause, thyroid conditions, insulin resistance, medications, and changing sleep can affect appetite, energy, fluid retention, recovery, and spontaneous movement. That can make a calorie deficit harder to create or sustain - but it does not mean your body is broken.

What you can control

- Prioritize strength training to preserve muscle.
- Eat protein and fiber regularly to manage hunger.
- Keep your deficit moderate enough to support sleep and training.
- Reduce decision fatigue with repeatable breakfasts, lunches, and grocery staples.
- Use weekly averages because water fluctuations may be less predictable.
- Discuss persistent symptoms with a qualified clinician rather than blaming yourself.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL INPUT

Talk with a healthcare professional about unexplained rapid weight change, persistent fatigue, missed or unusually heavy periods, hot flashes that disrupt life, hair loss, significant digestive symptoms, or suspected thyroid or glucose issues. Nutrition coaching does not replace medical diagnosis or treatment.

Sleep and stress are not bonus habits

Short sleep can increase hunger, cravings, and perceived effort while reducing recovery. Start with a consistent wake time, a short wind-down routine, a cooler dark room, and less late-night screen stimulation. Stress management can be as simple as a walk, five quiet minutes, journaling, breathing, or asking for help.

Your plan should adapt to your current season. During injury, caregiving, travel, or high stress, maintaining habits may be the successful phase - not a failure to push harder.

08 | BUILD CONSISTENCY THAT SURVIVES WEEKENDS

Your plan needs a version for imperfect days.

Most people do not need more rules. They need fewer decisions and a plan for predictable obstacles.

Set three levels of success

IDEAL DAY	REALISTIC DAY	MINIMUM DAY
Full workout Planned meals Step target Meal prep	Short workout Convenient protein Two walks Simple dinner	Protein twice Fruit or veg twice 10 min movement Water bottle

Weekend strategy

- Keep breakfast and lunch similar to weekdays when dinner is flexible.
- Do not skip meals to 'save calories' if that makes you arrive ravenous.
- Choose the food or drink you care about most instead of automatically having everything.
- Plan the next normal meal - do not compensate with fasting or punishment cardio.
- Expect scale water after restaurant food and wait for the trend to settle.

THE NEVER-MISS-TWICE RULE

One missed habit is life. Two can become a new pattern. Your next action does not need to be impressive: log the next meal, fill your water bottle, take a short walk, or prepare tomorrow's breakfast.

Motivation is helpful but unreliable. Make desired actions easier: keep protein visible, schedule workouts, use grocery pickup, repeat meals, place walking shoes by the door, and tell someone your plan.

START HERE | YOUR 7-DAY FOUNDATION PLAN

Do not overhaul everything. Collect information and prove you can repeat the basics.

DAY	FOCUS	ACTION
1	**Baseline**	Record body weight if appropriate, typical food, steps or movement, sleep, and water. Do not change anything yet.
2	**Protein**	Choose a protein target or add one protein serving. Plan tomorrow's protein sources.
3	**Meals**	Build two meals using protein + produce + carbohydrate + a measured fat.
4	**Movement**	Add a 10-minute walk or an appropriate movement break.
5	**Strength**	Complete a full-body session or schedule your next two sessions.
6	**Environment**	Create a short grocery list and prepare two convenient protein options.
7	**Review**	Notice what worked, where the plan broke down, and one adjustment for next week.

Your weekly check-in

- What did I complete most consistently?
- Where did hunger or energy become difficult?
- Did I train and recover well?
- What does my weekly weight trend show?
- Was my target realistic for this season?
- What is the smallest useful adjustment for next week?

DO NOT CHANGE EVERYTHING AT ONCE

If progress is not moving after 2-3 consistent weeks, adjust one lever: slightly reduce calories, add manageable movement, improve tracking accuracy, or tighten weekend structure. Then observe again.

YOUR PLAN | ONE-PAGE STARTER CHECKLIST

Choose targets you can repeat for the next two weeks.

My reason for starting:

My estimated maintenance calories:

My starting calorie target:

My daily protein target:

My movement or step target:

My strength-training days:

My minimum-day plan:

My biggest obstacle and response:

Daily foundations

☐ Protein plan	☐ Produce twice	☐ Water
☐ Planned movement	☐ Strength or recovery	☐ Food logged honestly

YOU DO NOT NEED TO DO THIS PERFECTLY.

You need a plan that fits your body, your schedule, and your real life.



WHAT COACHING CAN HELP WITH

- Personalized calorie and macro targets
- Strength training for your schedule and equipment
- Step, cardio, and water goals
- Weekly check-ins and adjustments
- Accountability without shame
- Education so you understand the process

Ready for a plan built around you?

Visit coaching.mandyellisfitness.com or email mehealthfitness26@gmail.com.

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