

It's Not Willpower

The five shifts that finally make fat loss work after 35.
No restriction. No shame.

IFBB BIKINI PRO N1 CERTIFIED (BIOMECHANICS & PROGRAM DESIGN) PN1 NUTRITION
200+ WOMEN COACHED SINCE 2016

5

shifts, grounded in real
physiology

0

crash diets, and no cutting
out the foods you love

1

place to start. The one that
feels most doable this week

— START HERE

If you're doing everything right and the scale won't move, read this.

You're eating less. You're on the treadmill. You're doing the exact things that used to work, and the weight isn't budging. Maybe it's even creeping up, especially around your middle. And somewhere along the way you started wondering if the problem is you.

Let me say this as clearly as I can. It's not you. It's not laziness, and it's not a lack of willpower. Somewhere after 35 your hormones quietly changed the rules of the game, and nobody handed you the new rulebook.

That's what this guide is. Five shifts, grounded in real physiology, that actually work for a woman's body in perimenopause. No crash diets. No cutting out the foods you love. No punishing yourself in the gym. Just the things that move the needle when your hormones are shifting, explained simply, so you know exactly what to do differently starting today.

You are not broken. Your body changed, and it's asking you to train and eat for the woman you are now, not the one you were at 25.

— THE PART NO ONE EXPLAINED

Why it got harder, in plain English.

Perimenopause can start in your mid 30s, years before your period actually stops. During this stretch your estrogen doesn't just decline, it swings, unpredictably. And estrogen does a lot more than run your cycle. It influences where you store fat, how sensitive you are to carbohydrates, how well you sleep, and how easily you hold on to muscle.

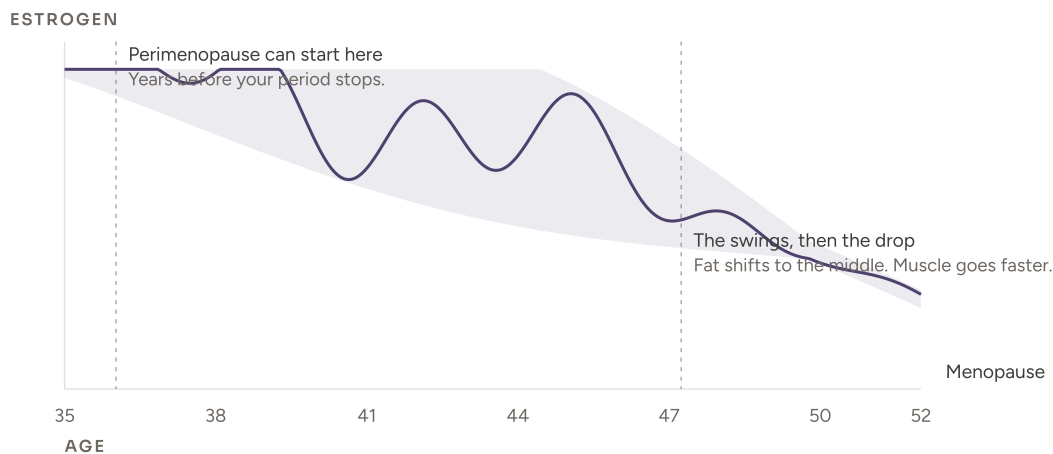


FIG. 1 · ILLUSTRATIVE PATTERN OF THE PERIMENOPAUSAL ESTROGEN SWING, NOT MEASURED DATA.

As estrogen drops, two things happen at once. First, your body starts parking fat around your abdomen instead of your hips and thighs, the “meno belly” that feels like it appeared overnight. Second, you start losing muscle faster than before. Muscle is your metabolic engine. It burns energy even at rest. Less muscle means a slower metabolism, which means the calorie math you relied on for years quietly stopped adding up.

Here's the part that matters most. The old playbook, eat less and run more, actually backfires now. Aggressive dieting and endless cardio tell a perimenopausal body to shed the very muscle you need and to hold on to fat even tighter. That's why doing more of what used to work leaves you frustrated and exhausted.

WHAT USED TO WORK

~~Eat less~~

~~Run more~~

~~Cardio as the main event~~

~~Aggressive deficit, fast~~

~~Weigh in, judge yourself~~

In a perimenopausal body this sheds the muscle you need and holds onto fat tighter.

WHAT WORKS AFTER 35

Eat enough protein

Lift heavy

Strength as the main event

Gentle deficit, held for months

Weigh in, read the trend

Same effort. Different target. This is what a shifting hormone profile responds to.

FIG. 2 · THE OLD PLAYBOOK AND THE NEW ONE, SIDE BY SIDE.

This is happening to you, not because of you.

VAL LUSVARDI · IFBB BIKINI PRO

— THE PLAN

The 5 Shifts.

You don't need to overhaul your life. You need to change five specific things. Start with the one that feels most doable. Momentum matters more than perfection.

01 SHIFT ONE Eat MORE protein, not less food

Your instinct in perimenopause is to eat less. But under eating strips away muscle, the exact tissue keeping your metabolism alive. The single highest leverage change most women 35+ can make is eating more protein, at every meal.

Protein protects your muscle, keeps you full for hours, and takes more energy just to digest. It's the closest thing to a metabolic insurance policy you have right now. And spreading it through the day works far better than one big hit at dinner.

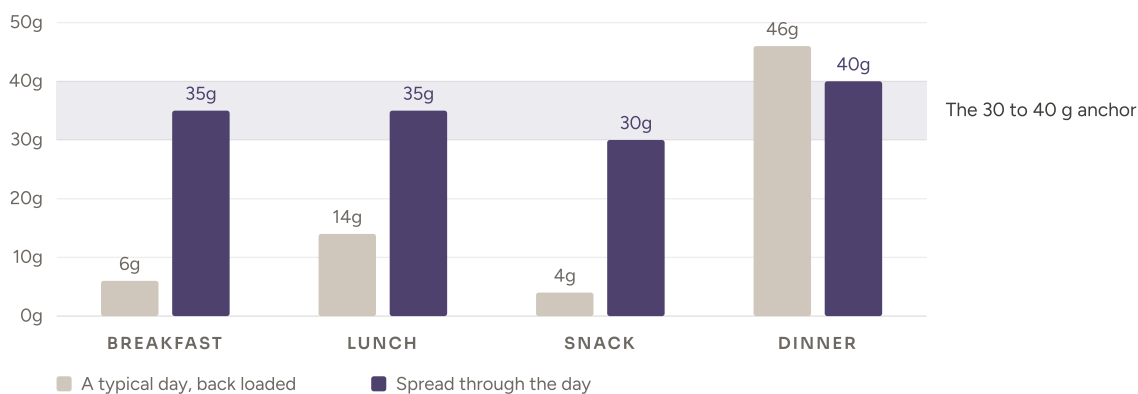


FIG. 3 · THE SAME DAY OF FOOD, BACK LOADED AND SPREAD OUT.

TRY THIS

- Aim for about 1 g of protein per pound of your goal body weight. If you have a lot to lose, work from your target weight, not today's.
- Anchor every meal with 30 to 40 g of protein: eggs, Greek yogurt, chicken, fish, lean beef, tofu, a quality shake.
- Build the plate protein first, then add the rest. You'll naturally crowd out the mindless grazing.

YOUR NUMBER, WITHOUT THE MATH. AIM FOR THE UPPER END.

YOUR GOAL WEIGHT	PROTEIN PER DAY	PER MEAL, OVER 4
130 lb	105 to 130 g	30 to 35 g
145 lb	115 to 145 g	30 to 38 g
160 lb	130 to 160 g	35 to 40 g
175 lb	140 to 175 g	35 to 45 g
190 lb	150 to 190 g	38 to 48 g

GOAL • 30 TO 40 G PROTEIN, EVERY MEAL

02

SHIFT TWO

Lift heavy, stop punishing yourself with cardio

If you take one thing from this guide, take this. Resistance training is now your number one tool. Lifting is what rebuilds the muscle perimenopause is trying to take, which protects your metabolism, your bones, and down the road, your independence.

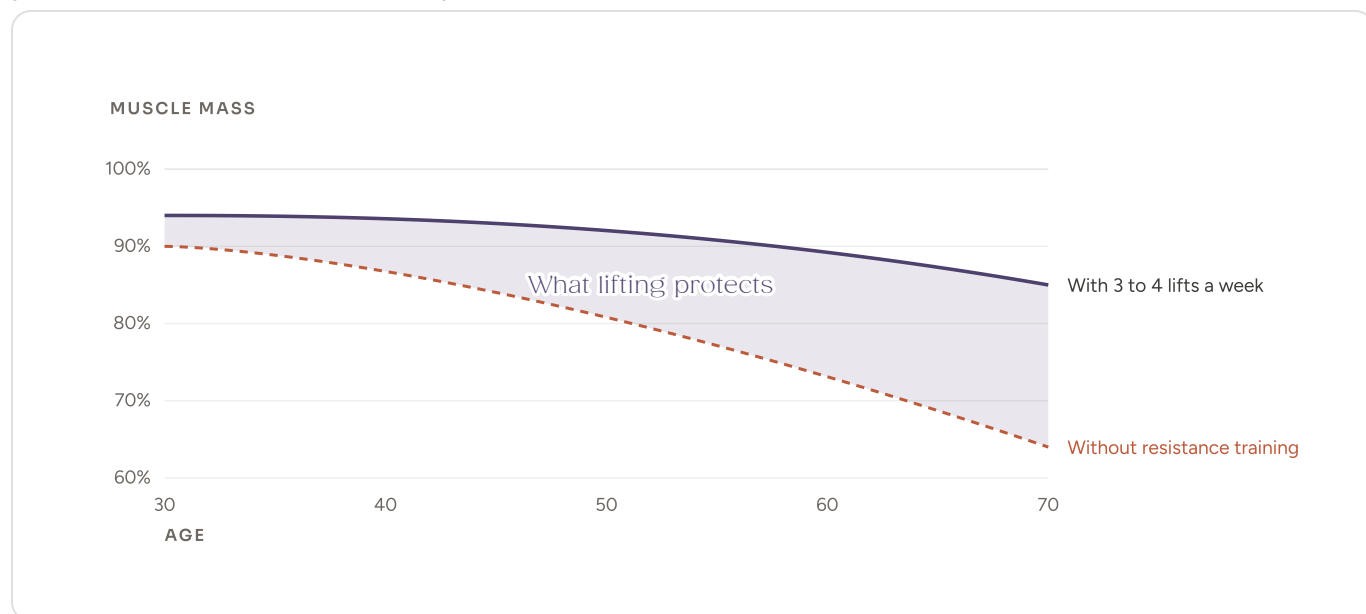


FIG. 4 · DIRECTIONAL ILLUSTRATION OF MUSCLE MASS WITH AND WITHOUT REGULAR LIFTING.

Endless cardio can dig you into a hole. It spikes hunger and stress without building the muscle you need. You don't have to give up walks or spin class if you love them. But they can't be the main event anymore. Strength is.

TRY THIS

- Strength train 3 to 4 days a week, focused on the big movements: squat, hinge, push, pull.
- Progress over time. Add a little weight or a rep when a set starts feeling easy.
- Keep cardio as a supporting player: daily walks for recovery and steps, not as punishment.

GOAL · 3 TO 4 STRENGTH SESSIONS A WEEK

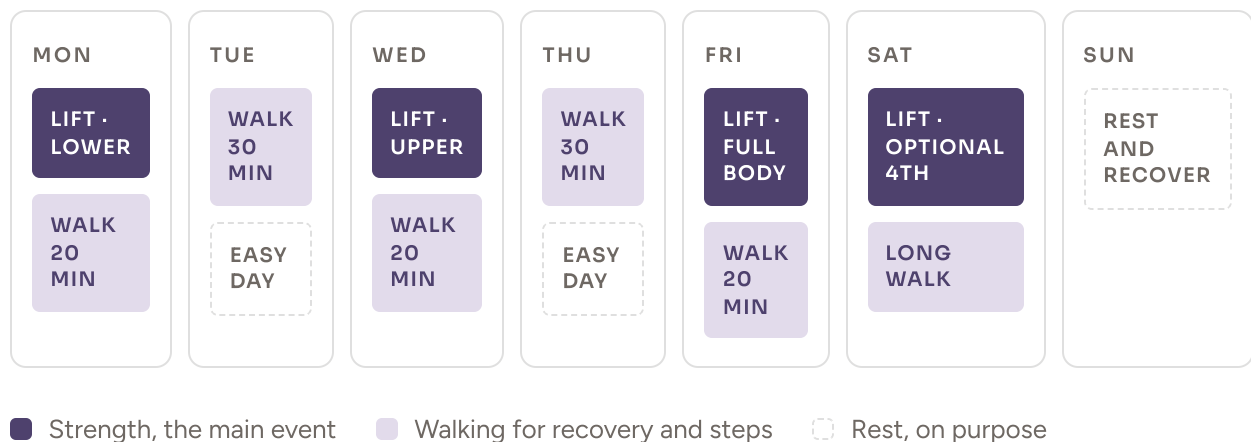


FIG. 5 · WHAT A REAL WEEK LOOKS LIKE. NOT PUNISHING, AND CARDIO NEVER TAKES OVER.

03 SHIFT THREE

Protect your sleep like it's training

Sleep isn't a luxury or a reward. It's a fat loss tool, and in perimenopause it's one of the most powerful ones you have. Poor sleep raises the stress hormones that tell your body to store belly fat, wrecks your hunger signals so you crave sugar the next day, and drains the energy you need to train and cook well.

STARTS HERE

A short,
broken
night

Night sweats, a 3
a.m. wake up.
Hormones, not
imagination.

THEN

Stress
hormones
climb

The signal that
tells your body to
store fat around
the middle.

THEN

Hunger
signals
misfire

Sugar cravings the
next day that feel
like a character
flaw.

THEN

Training
and
cooking slip

Less energy for the
lift, less patience
for a real meal.

And a harder night follows. Break it anywhere and the loop loosens.

FIG. 6 · THE SLEEP LOOP, AND WHERE YOU CAN INTERRUPT IT.

If the night sweats and 3 a.m. wake ups are stealing your sleep, you're not imagining it. That's the hormones too. You may not be able to make it perfect, but you can protect it fiercely, and even small wins compound.

TRY THIS

- Treat a wind down as non negotiable: same bedtime, screens down, lights low.
- Keep the room cool and dark. It genuinely helps with night sweats.
- Front load your caffeine before noon, and count the afternoon pre workout. That's caffeine too, and it's often the reason a 10 p.m. bedtime turns into midnight.

GOAL · A WIND DOWN YOU ACTUALLY PROTECT

04

SHIFT FOUR

Ditch the crash, use a gentle deficit and more fiber

Crash diets feel productive and are exactly wrong for this stage. Deep, aggressive deficits burn muscle and spike the stress that holds onto fat. What actually works now is a gentle, sustainable deficit paired with real food volume, especially fiber.

Fiber keeps you full, steadies your blood sugar, and supports the gut and hormone balance that matter more than ever in perimenopause. It lets you eat satisfying amounts of food while still losing fat, the opposite of the deprivation you've been white knuckling.

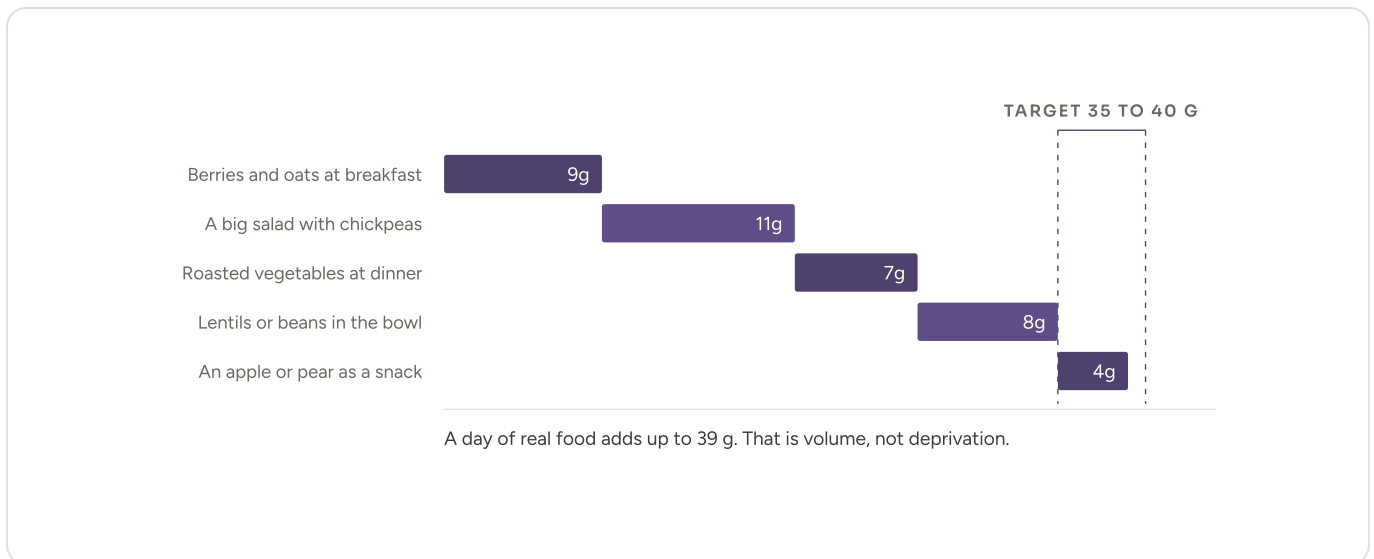


FIG. 7 · AN ILLUSTRATIVE DAY OF FOOD AGAINST THE 35 TO 40 G FIBER TARGET.

TRY THIS

- Choose a modest deficit you can hold for months, not a punishing one you'll quit in two weeks.
- Work toward 35 to 40 g of fiber a day from vegetables, fruit, legumes, and whole grains.
- Fill half your plate with plants, anchor it with protein, and let starches and fats round it out.

GOAL • 35 TO 40 G FIBER, A DEFICIT YOU CAN HOLD

05 SHIFT FIVE

Track data, not morality

The scale is a data point. It is not a verdict on your worth, your discipline, or how the week went. Your weight moves for a dozen reasons that have nothing to do with fat: water, hormones, sodium, sleep, where you are in your cycle. When you read a number as a moral grade, one bad morning can blow up an entire day of choices.

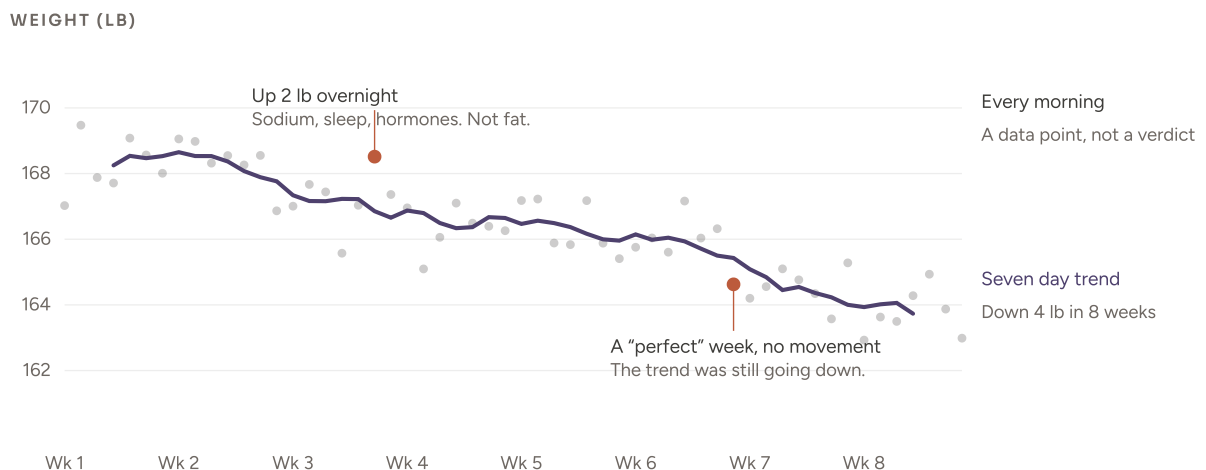


FIG. 8 • EIGHT ILLUSTRATIVE WEEKS OF DAILY WEIGH INS WITH A SEVEN DAY TREND.

The women who succeed in perimenopause are the ones who zoom out. They watch trends over weeks, not mornings. They notice the wins the scale can't see, strength going up, clothes fitting better, energy returning, and they keep going when the scale is being moody, because they understand the data instead of fearing it.

TRY THIS

- Weigh over time and watch the multi week trend, not any single day.
- Track wins the scale can't see: weights lifted, waist, sleep, energy, mood.
- When a number surprises you, get curious. Ask what the data is telling you, not what you did wrong.

GOAL · DATA, NOT A VERDICT

Food is not a moral test, and neither is
the scale.

YOU ARE THE ACTOR IN YOUR LIFE. THE DATA JUST HELPS YOU STEER.

Where to start.

You don't do all five at once. There's an order that gets you the most result for the least overwhelm, the same hierarchy I use with my clients. Nail each layer before you stack the next one on.

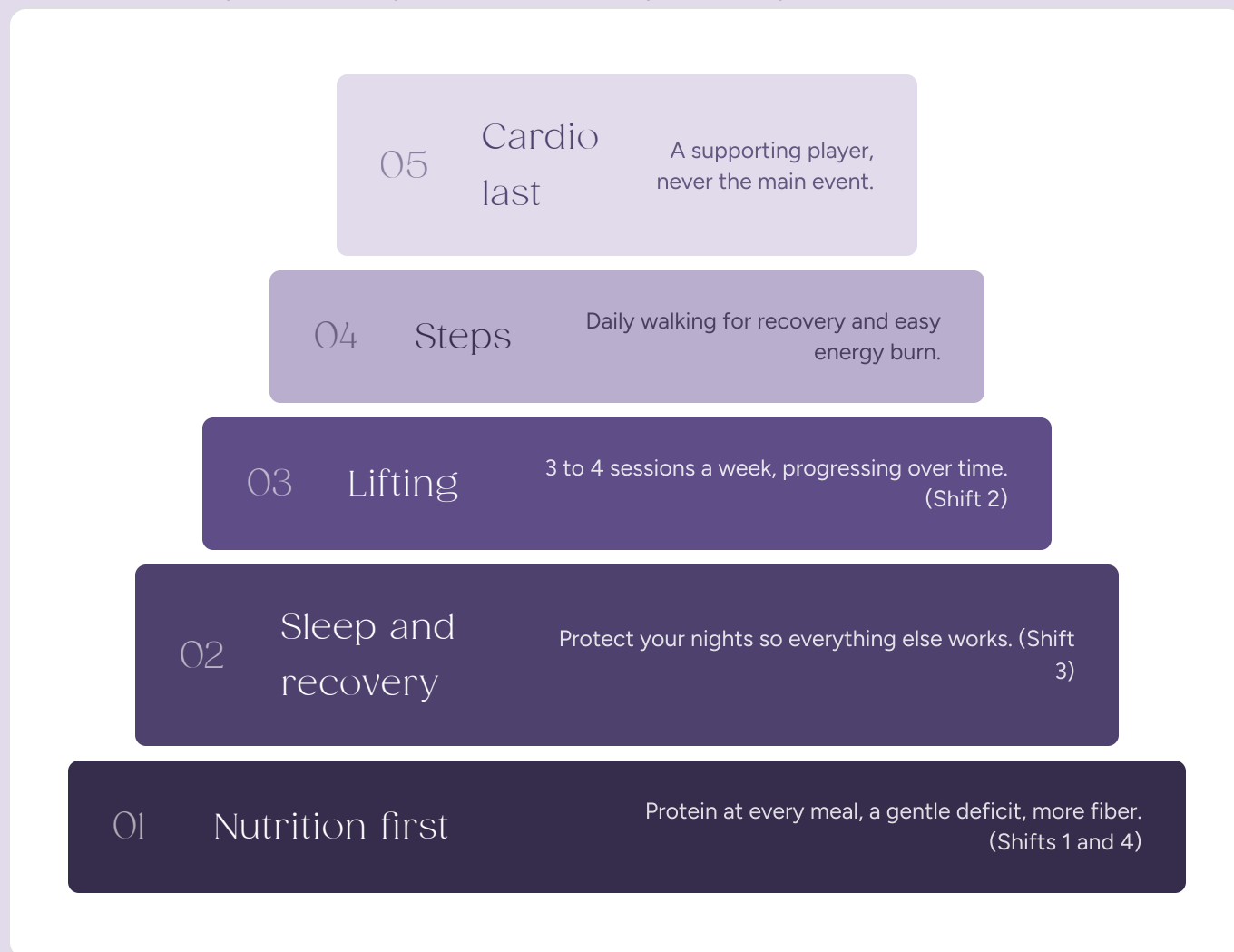


FIG. 9 · THE HIERARCHY. WIDEST LAYER FIRST.

Pick the shift that feels most doable this week and start there. One change held for a month beats five changes abandoned in a weekend.

It's Not Willpower

The five shifts that finally make fat loss work after 35.

Shift 01

Eat more protein, not less food

Anchor every meal. Protein protects the muscle keeping your metabolism alive.

30 TO 40 G PROTEIN, EVERY MEAL

Shift 02

Lift heavy, stop punishing yourself with cardio

Squat, hinge, push, pull. Add a little weight when a set feels easy.

3 TO 4 STRENGTH SESSIONS A WEEK

Shift 03

Protect your sleep like it's training

Same bedtime, cool dark room, caffeine before noon.

A WIND DOWN YOU ACTUALLY PROTECT

Shift 04

Ditch the crash, use a gentle deficit and more fiber

Half the plate plants, anchored with protein. Volume, not deprivation.

35 TO 40 G FIBER, A DEFICIT YOU CAN HOLD

Shift 05

Track data, not morality

Watch the multi week trend. Track the wins the scale can't see: weights lifted, waist, sleep, energy, mood.

DATA, NOT A VERDICT

Start with the one shift that feels most doable this week.



— YOUR NEXT STEP

You don't have to figure this out alone

If this guide made something click, imagine what happens with a plan built for your body, your schedule, and your life, with someone in your corner every week.

That's what I do. I've helped over 200 women get strong, lose fat, and feel like themselves again, without extremes and without giving up the foods and the life they love. Book a free call and we'll talk about where you want to go and whether coaching is the right fit. No pressure, no pitch. Just a real conversation.

Schedule your onboarding call →

STRENGTHTRAINWITHVAL.COM

Built for women 35+ who are done being told it's a willpower problem. No restriction. No shame. Just strength that lasts.

Val Lusvardi

IFBB BIKINI PRO · STRENGTH & LIFESTYLE COACH

— ABOUT YOUR COACH

Hi, I'm Val

I'm an IFBB Bikini Pro, N1 Certified in biomechanics and program design, and PN1 Nutrition certified. Since 2016 I've helped women 35 and up lose fat, build real strength, and thrive through perimenopause, without restriction, guilt, or extremes. I believe you deserve to know the why behind everything you do, not just a list of rules. When you understand your own body, you stop fighting it, and that's when everything changes.

My approach is simple. Meet you where you are, use real science, and build habits that last a lifetime. No shame. No quick fixes. Just a coach who's in your corner.

Built for women 35+ who are done being told it's a willpower problem. No restriction. No shame. Just strength that lasts.

VAL LUSVARDI • IFBB BIKINI PRO • N1 CERTIFIED (BIOMECHANICS & PROGRAM DESIGN) • PN1 NUTRITION

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This guide is for education and is not medical advice. Talk to your doctor before making changes, especially regarding hormones or medication.

